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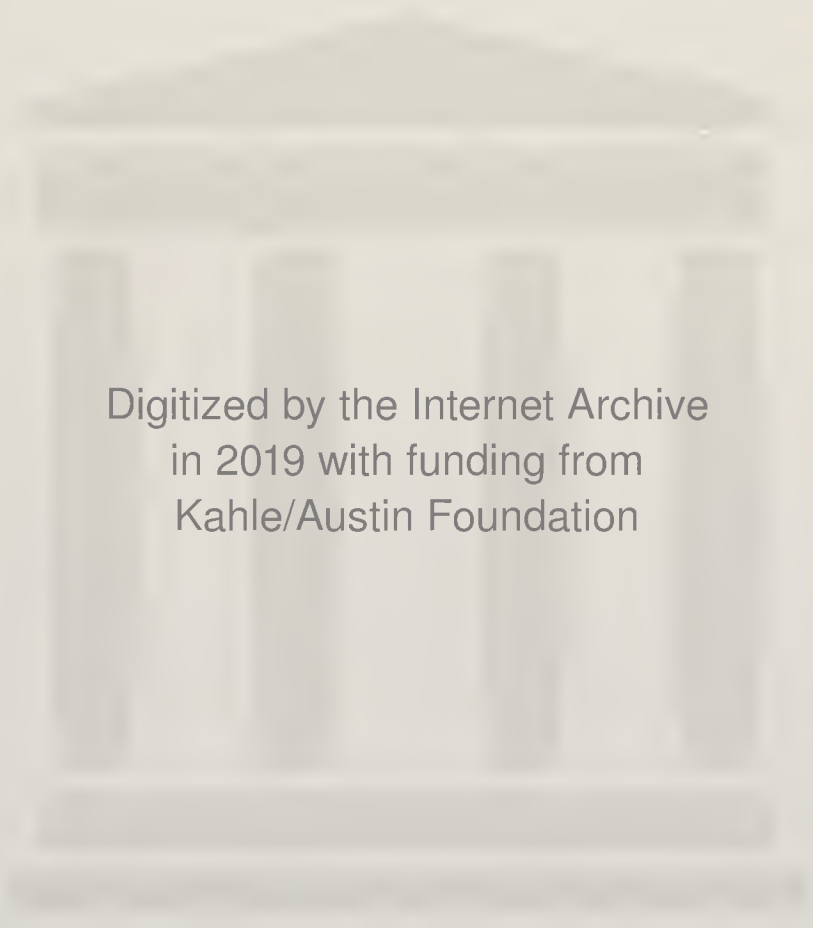
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THE WORKING CLASS IN ENGLAND 1875-1914

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**THE
WORKING CLASS
IN ENGLAND
1875-1914** 15

**EDITED BY
JOHN BENSON**



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INTRODUCTION

Despite recent, well publicised setbacks, social and labour history have prospered in Britain during the past two decades. Social history has acquired its own university chairs and departments, its own professional organisations, conferences and journals - all the accoutrements which mark the emergence of a distinct academic discipline.¹ The progress of labour history has been less spectacular perhaps; but it too has thrived. Labour history's traditional institutional and political strengths (what one critic has dubbed 'the boring bureaucracy of trade unions and proletarian parties'²) have been supplemented by the successes of social history: by new studies of demography and kinship, class consciousness, economic and social mobility, popular culture, urban life, education, crime, social protest, leisure, religion, health, sexual behaviour and the lives of women and children. The list seems almost endless.³

Historians of the late Victorian and Edwardian working class have benefited enormously from this growth of ambition and achievement, from the growing volume of knowledge about almost every aspect of the lives of ordinary people. Yet this burgeoning historiography brings its own difficulties. Indeed the very proliferation of information, and the increasing specialisation which it encourages, drives even the most conscientious and critical of historians to take more on trust than they should; it forces them to accept uncritically too much about those many aspects of working class life about which it is no longer possible for them to possess an intimate understanding. Thus Poor Law historians have overlooked the importance of self-help and of private charity; historians of work have neglected many types of criminal and quasi-criminal activity;

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trade union historians have ignored, or misunderstood, the attitudes, experiences and behaviour of the rank and file.⁴

The contributors to this volume are profoundly conscious of the dangers of such atomisation; only too aware of the need to study the crucial, yet complex and elusive, interrelationships between what have been treated too often as distinct aspects of working class experience.⁵ What is needed is a new synthesis. This volume, it must be stressed quite clearly, is not that synthesis; neither does it aim to be comprehensive; there is little here, for example, about working class religion, education, politics, poverty, or immigration.⁶ Its aim is more modest: to bring together a collection of up to date, wide ranging and provocative studies on aspects of late Victorian and Edwardian working class life to which recent research has been able to add to our knowledge and deepen our understanding.

Contributors have been chosen, not for their likely adherence to any editorial 'line', but because they were known to the editor, personally or by reputation, to be experts in their fields. Indeed there is, it is hoped, a stimulating eclecticism about this collection. Elizabeth Roberts examines the socialisation of children and young people in the family: 'it is only', she concludes, 'if the deep abiding bond between the working class child and his family is understood, that the position of the young people in a wider society can be understood.' F.B. Smith explores some still neglected changes in standards of health: the transition from the traditional pattern of morbidity and mortality based on endemic infections to the contemporary one of widespread, chronic functional disorders in an older population; the success of antiseptics and the rise of mass surgery; and the movement towards smaller completed families and present levels of infant and maternal mortality. John Benson challenges the view that the history of work between 1875 and 1914 was characterised by struggle and change. There were present, he argues, 'in even the leading sectors of the economy ... major continuities in workplace organisation, experiences and attitudes.' M.J. Haynes believes that previous accounts of class consciousness have paid too much attention to membership of political organisations; he attempts therefore to analyse class and class conflict primarily through strikes and industrial relations. Hugh Cunningham takes issue with the way in which late nineteenth and early twentieth century leisure has

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been seen in one of two contexts: either as a 'golden age' or as the beginning of 'mass leisure'. Moving beyond a study of the opportunities for leisure within the working class, he examines various ideological constraints and concludes that the concept of the leisure class provides the most helpful context for the study of leisure in this period. Finally, David Woods seeks to estimate the extent of community violence in late Victorian England and to comment upon its forms and patterns. He concludes that 'From approximately 1880 onwards the indices of community violence showed a marked decline, suggesting a substantial change in public order in most areas.' Taken together, the contributions to this collection suggest that the everyday lives and values of late Victorian and Edwardian working people were even more varied, creative and complex than is generally suspected.

If the contributors to this volume provoke their readers into challenging the views expressed in it - or, better still, encourage them to undertake that sorely needed synthesis - they will have achieved their purpose.

NOTES

1. H. Perkin, 'Social History in Britain', *Journal of Social History*, 10(2), 1976; D. Smith, 'Social history and sociology - more than just good friends', *The Sociological Review*, 30(2), 1982; Editorial, 'Twenty Years On, *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 41, 1980; E.J. Hobsbawm, 'From Social History to the History of Society', *Daedalus*, 100, 1971; Jay Winter, 'Introduction: labour history and labour historians', in Jay Winter (ed.), *The Working Class in Modern British History: Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling* (Cambridge, 1983).

2. Perkin, 'Social History', p.133.

3. Perkin, 'Social History', pp.136-9; Hobsbawm, 'Social History', p.12; R.J. Morris, 'Whatever happened to the British working class, 1750-1850?', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 41, 1980; K. Thomas, 'The ferment of fashion', *Times Literary Supplement*, April 30, 1982.

4. See, for example, the introduction to John

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Benson, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History* (Dublin, 1980) and A. Seldon (ed.), *The Long Debate on Poverty* (London, 1972).

5. P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The culture of the factory in later Victorian England* (Brighton, 1982).

6. The *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History* contains valuable bibliographical guides: see, for example, J.S. Hurt, 'Education and the working classes', *Bulletin*, 30, 1975; 31, 1975 and 43, 1981 and A.J. MacKenzie, 'The Communist Party of Great Britain', *Bulletin*, 44, 1982.

THE WORKING CLASS IN ENGLAND 1875-1914

Chapter One

THE FAMILY

Elizabeth Roberts

I

This chapter will concentrate on certain aspects of working class family life, notably the socialisation of children and young people, and the interaction in their lives of home, work and school. It is almost impossible to define in terms of age who exactly was a late Victorian or Edwardian child. There were no recognised rites of passage between childhood and adulthood; on the one hand, quite young children adopted heavy responsibilities; on the other, young people of twenty could be very much under their parents' control. James Walvin in *A Child's World* also had some problem in defining a child and finally settled on the age limit of fourteen. 'Yet the age of fourteen, particularly at the end of our period, has a more than arbitrary importance, it was the predominant school leaving age and the limit of childhood criminality.'¹ For many reasons which will become apparent in the chapter, no precise definition of children and young people by age has been attempted, although most of the evidence relates to the under twenties.

The evidence used is drawn not only from secondary documentary sources but also from oral ones, and selections are used from an extensive archive of oral evidence collected from 170 old people in south Cumbria and Lancashire. This evidence is particularly useful in an analysis of family life because so many facets of that life are not recorded in official documents.² It must also be apparent that the bulk of the oral evidence will relate most directly to the last 25 years of the period 1875-1914.

It has been suggested, both during the period itself and subsequently, that the family was the

most important socialising agent in a child's life. Helen Bosanquet, a prominent member of the Charity Organisation Society, wrote in 1906, 'Apart from the fact that no one has ever devised an adequate substitute for a parent, the further fact remains that the family with its mingled diversity and identity of interests is the best, if not indeed, the only school of life of its citizens.'³ Philip McCann wrote in 1977 that 'The moderate functionalist definition of socialisation is usually on the lines of the transmission of culture, the process whereby men learn rules and practices of social groups; the family is considered as the primary agency and the school or other formal educational institutions as secondary in transmitting skills, values and social norms.'⁴ (Ironically, but possibly inevitably, because of the difficulty of finding evidence about socialisation within the family, other than from oral sources, the book then concentrates on the provision of education and the process of socialisation by formal educational agencies). Stephen Humphries has written: 'It is difficult ... to establish the precise significance of schooling as an agency of socialisation ... legislators ... severely underestimated the extent and intensity of resistance to provided education. This opposition was rooted in the values and modes of behaviour that were learned from the family, the neighbourhood and street culture. Indeed it is likely that agencies of socialisation operating outside the school exercised 'a much more profound influence upon the morals and manners of the working class child than the school teacher in the classroom.'⁵ While one might wish to question the existence of *widespread* active resistance to provided schooling, there can be little question of the paramount importance of the family in the socialisation of the working class child and youth throughout the period under discussion.

It is of course obvious that no working class family existed in either an economic, social, or moral vacuum. It can be argued that virtually all aspects of a family's background had some influence on their behaviour whether as parents or as children. There is much truth in this but an attempt has to be made to analyse the more obvious influences and constraints on the ways in which working class parents consciously socialised their children.

Firstly the economic standing of working class families was very important. The studies of Victorian and Edwardian poverty are well known and

demonstrate the extent of the problem.⁶ Charles Booth in his survey of life and labour in London in the 1880s and Seebohm Rowntree's later study of York showed that many working class people had their basic needs unprovided for. Seebohm Rowntree developed the concept of a poverty line. He suggested that any family of four or five persons with an income of less than 21s 8d a week was below the poverty line and unable to afford the basic essentials of life.⁸ There are no comparable data available for Lancashire, but in the north of the county no unskilled man earned as much as 21s 8d before 1914, and many of course, had families larger than four to five persons. From the oral evidence it is clear that these families might not have been quite as poor as Rowntree's hypothesis would suggest but it is also clear that their poverty and ways of making it less acute were one of their chief pre-occupations.⁹ Questions of budgeting and of making ends meet affected many aspects of the working class child's upbringing. Nor should it be presumed that the spectre of poverty only haunted the families of the lower paid. Skilled men and those in a supervisory capacity could earn nearly twice as much as a labourer in Edwardian England but that did not make them and their families comfortably off. Many men and women in this group remembered poverty very clearly, either as children or as young adults, before improved wages were achieved, and these memories influenced the ways in which their children were brought up.

Working class people were not simply economic pawns, with all aspects of their lives dominated by financial considerations. They acted according to a complex set of moral and ethical rules handed down from generation to generation. (These were obviously modified to some extent by each generation and each family but there is a strong impression of continuity and conformity in the late Victorian and Edwardian period). The original sources for these *mores* are of course difficult to ascertain. Much of the moral philosophy of the working class can be traced to the Bible, and the teaching of the churches. Religion, throughout this period, continued to play an important part in working class life.¹⁰ Working class people did not however tend to be concerned with theological debates, but followed what was widely considered to be the basic Christian teaching of loving your neighbour; added to which was a widespread belief in judgement and punishment for wrong doing and this sometimes resulted in an

observable (but unrecognised by those holding them) ambivalence in attitudes to, and in relationships with, others. Added to these basic moral standards was an overwhelming devotion to respectability.¹¹ Some observers have divided the working class into the respectable majority and the rough minority, but it is clear from oral evidence that while the rough might not have followed or accepted *all* the standards of the truly respectable (they tended to swear and fight for example!), they also had their own pretensions to *some* respectability.

The characteristics of respectability are well known: a devotion to the work ethic and to apparent cleanliness; an avoidance of swearing, fighting and discussion of sexual matters; and a respect for other people and their property. Although the features and existence of respectability are easy to observe, their origin is difficult to establish. E.P. Thompson saw Methodism as contributing to the rationalisation of work through self-discipline, whereby the labourer must be turned into his own slave driver.¹² Many examples of a passionate devotion to the work ethic can be found in both documentary and oral evidence but by the end of the nineteenth century it was certainly not confined to members of any particular religious sect but could be found in them all. The other elements of respectability can probably also be traced to religious sources so that from the Bible and especially the Ten Commandments came the rejection of stealing, swearing and adultery; from the Pauline tradition came the suppression of sexuality and from the Methodist tradition the idea of cleanliness being next to godliness. From the by now well established industrial discipline there flowed the virtues of punctuality, obeying authority and self-discipline. Some historians have suggested that these standards were somehow imposed on the working class child by external agencies, particularly schools. Stephen Humphries argued that one of the purposes of state education in the last decades of the nineteenth century was the amelioration of certain working class social problems 'through an infusion of the bourgeois values such as hard work discipline and thought'.¹³ It is obvious that schools, churches and the work place did reinforce these values but it must be emphasised that these standards had become, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, internalised within the working class and were transmitted from generation to generation principally through the family. This chapter

examines how these values were transmitted and some of the effects they had on the individual and on family and working class life in general.

II

The ways in which children learned their standards were complex and varied to some extent from family to family. They learned through a mixture of precept, example, exhortation, reward and punishment, and through the absorbing of unspoken but powerful assumptions. Virtually all working class children were expected to do as they were told by parents (no exceptions have been found to this generalisation), and to conform to the parents' externally imposed standards and rules. Obedience was the prime virtue to be encouraged among the young.¹⁴ (This tradition did not disappear with the arrival of the twentieth century and was much discussed by sociologists in the 1950s and 1960s).¹⁵ There appears to have been no difference within the working class between the skilled and unskilled in their belief in the importance of child obedience. Some contemporary observers and later historians believed that there was. Alexander Paterson wrote, 'Parental discipline is in fact a sure sign of prosperity or respectability.'¹⁶ John Gillis accepted this judgement: 'Obedience on the part of the children was regarded as an especially important status symbol.'¹⁷ Standish Meacham wrote 'Segregation was implied in the strict disciplinary standards imposed upon working class children in all but the most disreputable households.'¹⁸ It is not easy to define 'most disreputable' but it is clear from the oral evidence (which included that of some very rough families) that child obedience was always expected and child disobedience invariably punished.

Children were not of course angels and from time to time either wilfully or unintentionally transgressed their parents' rules or fell below the expected standard of behaviour. The ways the misdemeanours were dealt with varied depending on the perceived seriousness of the offence and on the severity of the parents. Some children were never physically chastised at all. Mrs W. came from a family of fifteen and she said: 'I don't think any of us ever got hit ... He just used to speak to us and that was all.'¹⁹ Unlike Mrs W., Mr S. was more afraid of his mother than his father, 'Odd times we might have been a bit thoughtless. She should say, "Now that wasn't a wise thing to do. You

want to think a bit more." and she would point at you just like that and that was enough. If you merited a thick ear you got it. It wasn't half measure, it was full weight'.²⁰ This reliance on the reprimand, supported by an occasional blow, was the most usual pattern. Some children were physically beaten frequently but these were a minority. Mr T.'s father was a soldier and later a docker, and in reply to a question about his strictness replied, 'Very strict, there's many a time he's kicked me under the table'.²¹ (Robert Roberts claimed that ex-regulars from the army or navy had a bad reputation for the treatment of their children).²² Other children were hit with sticks, cats o' nine tails, belts and fists but it would be quite wrong to suggest that the majority of working class children were physically hammered into submission by their parents. They were not. Paul Thompson, surveying the national picture, wrote, 'The strictness of Edwardian parents did not necessarily imply abundant physical punishment as is often believed. It is not true that families in which children were given a good hiding were common. The truth is that they did not need to because their authority was rarely openly challenged.'²³

Many aspects of working class life cannot be easily understood without a realisation that this habit of obedience to parental wishes continued to dominate the lives of working class children, through youth to adulthood. Writing of working class youth, Paul Thompson concluded, 'It is equally striking how few children recall any systematic challenge to their parent's authority at this stage ... It would seem that ... the habits of deference towards parents acquired in the first years of life, years of real and complete physical and emotional dependence upon parents, could long out last the power basis on which they were built.'²⁴ These habits of deference and obedience towards parents affected the working class child's schooling, his/her job and even his/her adult life.

III

The standards to which children needed to conform, the rules they were to obey have already been outlined, but it is also useful to examine their effect on children's and young people's lives in more detail. There was a very great emphasis on cleanliness, in the visible parts of the body, in top clothes and in the home itself. Hands, faces and

necks had to be scrubbed; boys often wore white celluloid collars (which inflicted very nasty burns when 'accidentally' set alight) and girls very often had immaculate white starched needlework pinafores. Shoes and clogs were polished until they shone. Houses too were scrubbed and polished; mothers spent a vast amount of time and effort in boiling, mangling, starching and ironing clothes and lace curtains. Floors were scrubbed, mats beaten, metal-work polished, grates black-leaded, windows polished, and steps were donkey stoned.

As a result of all this effort people and homes may have looked clean but this cleanliness was more apparent than real, since the immense difficulties women had in heating and lifting tubs of water meant that the thorough and frequent washing of both bodies and underclothes was almost impossible. No one remembered being washed more than once a week, and thick top clothes (like trousers, jumpers, coats and skirts) were washed even more infrequently. Respondents and Medical Officers of Health alike reported problems with fleas and head and body lice. Following the 1907 Education (Medical Inspection) Act data were collected on a national scale on the state of both children's health and their cleanliness. Dr George Newman's first report as Chief Medical Officer in 1910, recorded 30 to 40 percent of children as having unclean heads or bodies.²⁵

The almost total absence of bathrooms in working class homes before 1914 presented not only great practical problems for the parents but also something of a moral dilemma. The rules of respectability were clear on nakedness; it was forbidden! Consequently bath nights became a very complex organisational feat when brothers and sisters were not allowed to catch glimpses of each other (or, even worse, their parents) in the bath tub. Decades of Victorian puritanism had produced by the turn of the century a generation of working class parents who were extremely prudish about all aspects of sex and sexuality. Some respondents were brought up in such an inhibited atmosphere as children that as parents they themselves found it difficult to discuss any sexual matter with their children. In answer to the question 'Did your mother ever talk to you about the facts of life?' Mrs W. replied 'You just found out yourself and it was far better. Some of these kids are being taught so much that they try out what it is ... The only time I talked to B (her daughter) was about her periods ... I expect she found out at school.'²⁶ Another Preston woman,

asked the same question, replied, 'Nanny wouldn't speak like that because she was such a good living woman.'²⁷

It is truly astonishing that in such small houses, so frequently overcrowded, working class children remained so uninformed and so naive about sexual matters. Mothers' pregnancies continued to be unremarked, or indeed unnoticed, even by quite old children. Mrs M.'s brother was away in the First World War when his mother became pregnant. On a holiday at home he remarked 'You want to get yourself a new skirt Mum, your figure's gone terrible.' His sister remarked 'He didn't know there was a baby on the way, he was 19 nearly.'²⁸

And yet children, in emergencies, did become involved in confinements and their ignorance made the experience traumatic for them and was subsequently resented.

Do I remember her having them? Don't mention it. I always remember mother but they always hid it from you. M'father had gone to work, and I'd be only about 10 or 11 ... and I had to run over for the midwife. I put a coat on top of m'nightie and I can just remember m'mother sitting on the bed with a towel pulling in the moans. As a child 'Oh m'mother's going to die.' Then we were put out of the road and we didn't get to know anything after that. My mother was awful, she never told us anything.'²⁹

There are examples of ignorance of pregnancy and childbirth continuing into young adulthood for although respondents remember being told something about sex by contemporaries, it was sometimes surprisingly inaccurate. More than one young married woman found herself pregnant and expected the baby to be born through her navel. James Walvin overestimates the knowledge of sex gained by Victorian and Edwardian children: 'The sexual realities of adult life were inescapable ... for the poor sexuality was a feature of every day life.'³⁰ The ignorance recalled by so many respondents not only as children but as young adults too, would cause one drastically to question this conclusion

Girls of course had to be told something about menstruation. Many mothers forced themselves through what appears to have been a dreadful ordeal only once. They told their eldest daughter and expected her to see that the younger girls knew in

turn. By their silence or alternatively by their curious lists of 'taboo' activities during menstruation (like not washing your hair or having a bath), mothers undoubtedly imparted to many girls a feeling of repugnance about this natural function, a feeling that it was something shameful. Girls tended to develop feelings of being unclean and of somehow at risk whenever they were unwell.

We would probably have two or three pairs of knickers on, especially when we were unwell ... that was horrible work.

Did you have to wash pieces of cloth?

Yes we had proper towelling.

Was she particular about not letting your brothers see?

Oh yes, you hadn't to tell anybody or you hadn't to let anybody else see anything. Everything was kept out of the road.³¹

Examples can be found of the medical profession reinforcing these negative attitudes to menstruation. One Barrow woman related how she was excused school on medical grounds because of menstruation when she was twelve in 1901. 'The doctor gave mother a note, "Keep her at home because she is no sooner there than she's off"'. Carol Dyhouse examined medical views of menstruation and wrote, 'There was a view that during puberty the growing girl needed to establish a regular menstrual cycle. If this was not achieved because of energy being diverted into intellectual pursuits it was believed that permanent damage could be done to her reproductive system.'³²

Not only was frank discussion of sexual matters seen to be undesirable for its own sake, but underlying parental inhibitions about such matters as pregnancy and menstruation was the fear that girls might become pregnant before marriage and thus endanger not only their own, but also their family's respectability. Whilst, however, the working class universally frowned upon premarital sex and claimed to be horrified by premarital pregnancies, there were interesting variations in attitudes, firstly about the relative degrees of responsibility for pregnancies between males and females, and secondly towards an actual, as opposed to a hypothetical, pregnancy. At one end of the spectrum was the burning of an effigy of a young man who had got a girl 'into trouble' while at the other was the public stoning of a pregnant girl as she walked to

church to be married. Some families accepted an illegitimate child with love, but at the other extreme there were cases of pregnant unmarried girls killing themselves.

All families went to considerable trouble to ensure that neither their sons nor their daughters put themselves into situations which could be morally dangerous. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of coming in at a proper time of night. As will be seen from Mrs S.'s evidence, it was not always the girls who were shamed for being out late (although some terrible punishments were inflicted on some who stayed out past the set time).

Was she stricter than your father?

Well m'father, he didn't have a lot to do with us really, I mean he was at work all day. It was mother really that brought us up. I always remember a young man, he was a fisherman, and I met him like, I mean to say we were very friendly, and there wasn't a right lot in it you know, but he brought me home and I was at the corner of the street you know saying ... just having a few words with him. My mother come to the corner of the street, she said, 'Come on, get yourself in. He's no better than he ought to be to keep you out after nine o'clock.' Nine o'clock! And when I was going to be married, this is gospel. When I was going to be married, I was twenty-three, and my husband and I went up to see his brother to tell them that we were going to be married and invite them to the wedding. I was rather late, and my mother was sick in bed. You know she died a month after I was married. I came in at night, I opened the door and he came in with me and my mother shouted downstairs. 'What time do you call this coming in. You know he's no better than he ought to be for keeping you out in hours like this.' You know, very, very strict.³³

Not only were girls instructed 'not to get into trouble' but so too were boys. Mrs M. was the youngest of a big family, some of whom grew up before 1914.

I've seven brothers and there wasn't one had to be married. I mean they'd know you know. He used to tell them about it did he? He'd have killed them. No, I mustn't say that,

he must have told them and he would have mur.... you know, he would have seen there'd have been no shennakins. There wouldn't have been no flying their kites and then changing their minds. They'd have had to marry the girl, if she'd been good enough to do that with, she'd have been good enough to marry and that would have been dad's lot.³⁴

The success of this parental strictness appears to have had the desired effects if the illegitimacy rates both for the local area and for the nation are studied. The national figure in the period 1890-1914 never reached five percent and was frequently below four percent. It is impossible to know in what percentage of couples the girl was already pregnant when married, but the oral evidence would suggest that it was not high, (only four out of 170 respondents said that either they or their mothers were pregnant before marriage, although it is obvious that others might well not have known the truth about their parents unless wedding anniversaries were kept.)³⁵

Respectability not only meant avoidance of nudity, discussion of sexual matters and avoidance of sexual activity outside marriage, but also avoidance of swearing, fighting and stealing, all of which were regarded as forms of rough behaviour. Whatever men may have said at work, swearing was not permitted in the home. One old man from a very poor home said, 'I never swear, even to this day. I thought it fouled your mouth ... Never heard anything at all from us. If we did we would get a rattle across the puss, it would do us good.'³⁶ Robert Roberts too recalls that even in the roughest families in the roughest of areas, there were considerable inhibitions about using bad language especially in the home.³⁷

Children did of course fight, especially boys, but if they were discovered they could be sure of parental disapproval. Respectable people did not steal either, for were they not continually told how wrong this was by their own standards reinforced by the churches and the law? It is very difficult to estimate to what extent working class children were involved in theft or, if they were, whether or not they regarded it as theft. There are no examples in the oral evidence of respondents being involved in house or shop breaking, or pickpocketing. Indeed there were very few court cases involving juvenile theft; Stephen Humphries suggests that the figure

rarely exceeded 0.5 percent per annum in any district.³⁸ He also suggests that the low rates of prosecution grossly underestimated the true amount of juvenile theft.

There is certainly an ambivalence about theft in many respondents. As is obvious from the oral and documentary evidence there was very considerable poverty in working class families and many had to develop strategies which would expand the family income with either goods or cash. Many families, especially outside the big cities, developed a variety of ways of living off the land, such strategies being invariably carried out by the males of the family. The produce thus acquired was usually consumed by the family but the surplus would be sold for profit. Many of these traditional activities had been carried out within families for generations and were not of course illegal. The most common form of living off the land was growing fruit and vegetables on a rented plot of land and this was clearly a legal activity. There, of course, were many other forms of living off the land, some of which were legal, and others illegal. Respondents well knew which came into which category but the law's apparent *moral* ambivalences were reflected in the attitudes of some respondents. It was legal, for example, to take eels from the River Lune, but not salmon; it was legal to take fruit from hedgerows but not from orchards; it was not legal to catch rabbits but most landowners welcomed this form of pest control, while prosecuting those who took game birds. Collecting manure from the streets for the allotment was legal, but collecting coal from coalyards was not. The vast majority of respondents and their children clearly understood the differences between what was legal and what was not and did not indulge in the latter. But this was not true of every family and it was in these rather grey areas that illegal practices of living off the land can be found. It is doubtful if the families who carried these out regarded them as theft and there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that the salmon and rabbit poachers ever considered serious crimes, such as housebreaking. It is not surprising that working class people were not prepared to label themselves as thieves, but it is significant that when discussing *others* who partly lived illegally off the land, respondents do not condemn them as thieves either. (This cannot be attributed to a reluctance to condemn crime or sin; such condemnations are all too frequent in other circumstances).

Stephen Humphries described these various illegal activities thus: 'It is significant that many people described their illegal activities as traditional customs ... all of which conveyed a belief in time honoured rights in opposition to property law'.³⁹ The local evidence does reveal an attachment to traditional custom but says little about opposition to property law. In conclusion it must be emphasised that although some families were driven by poverty to illegal actions, the majority continued to live off the land in a perfectly legal way.

Being respectable implied of course that one was worthy of respect and that in turn one respected other people. Children learned from parental exhortation and examples the duty of helping kin and neighbours' errands were run, babies minded, all kinds of help were given. Many children did their tasks either because they wanted to, or because it was expected of them. Others (usually unbeknown to their parents) did small tasks in the expectation of reward. Whether the child was calculative or generous, they were all learning the duty of helping neighbours. This lesson was well learned and mutual help continued to be an important function of working class neighbourhoods well into this century. There is little evidence, however, that adults expected such direct rewards as did the next respondent as a child.

There was things that they would deem as important. An elderly person would insist on you doing a job for them without a reward. Sometimes you would see somebody standing on the step and you knew if she was standing on the step she wanted something doing so you didn't go that way, you went the other way. Neighbours, not a relation? Neighbours. Some of them you would knock and ask if they wanted anything because there was something about them, they were good. When you asked if they wanted a job, did they always give you something? They would give you a piece of cake or a bit of bread and jam. Did you go because you wanted to help or because you wanted the bread and jam? This was the inducement to go.⁴⁰

Respect was not only due to the living but to the dead as well. The Victorian and Edwardian child,

innocent about sex, was very knowledgeable about death. From their parents and neighbours (but probably rather less from improving books)⁴¹ children learned about the inevitability, frequency and indeed naturalness of death. Between one fifth and one quarter of all respondents experienced the death of a sibling before they were fourteen (many more babies and children died in the families concerned but some did so before the birth of the respondents themselves). The frequency with which children encountered death tended to reinforce the fatalism so often found in working class people of these generations; the attitudes of 'what is to be is to be...' and 'It's God's will'. Standish Meacham wrote, 'Many resorted to a kind of fatalism.'⁴² It was difficult to make plans or attempt to organise one's life when death was such an ever present threat. It is only rarely that one finds the death of a child met with anger rather than a fatalistic acceptance. Mrs G. remembered her father railing against the death of a son and associating the tragedy very directly with the social conditions of the working class.

He was a Socialist and a Trade Unionist and he told us what was wrong and what was right ... I remember him taking us up to the cemetery (to see the dead brother's grave). He said (over the grave) 'All you children what a future you've got ... Distinction, class distinction, unemployment, ... exploitation, ... how we were exploited.'⁴³

This kind of outburst was totally unusual; death was usually greeted with grief and acceptance but no anger, no questioning. Miss T. was twelve when her father died. 'He died a very good death, and when he was dying he called them all round ... all of us ..., and said that if he'd ever done anything to hurt us, or anything that was wrong, would we forgive him, and ask God to forgive him, and pray for him when he was dead.'⁴⁴

IV

Working class children and young people did not only learn their families' *mores*, they also learned much about their individual, familial and indeed their class economic and financial status. They learned from an early age that they were members of the working class and grew up with that indelible self-

image. In conjunction with this they learned much about poverty, budgeting and financial management. The learning about their class and financial status was obviously interconnected and began at an early age.

Small children did not of course think of themselves as poor, but they knew from an early age that little of anything should be wasted and that items like bought toys were luxuries to be expected, if at all, at Christmas. (Birthday presents were almost unknown). One respondent, interviewed early in the project, remembered being given a toothbrush by her parents for her birthday. At the time I believed this to be an indication of poverty. Subsequently I recognised it as a sign not only of prosperity but also of progressive thought; very few working class people before 1914 had toothbrushes.

Children learned to improvise toys from rubbish: footballs from old paper and rags, bats from old pieces of wood; and traditional street games required little if any equipment - endless versions of hide and seek, races, chasing and guessing games. Perhaps more significantly for their adult futures, children daily witnessed their mother's battles to make ends meet and to balance her budgets. As they grew they were expected to help in making something out of nothing - most symbolically the winter's peg rug making, when the whole family converted old sacks and old clothes into a rag rug. Children did a substantial part of the family's shopping and thus learned a lot about budgeting. Some went to the cooperative shops and learned the importance of the dividend whose growth was visibly demonstrated by the ever increasing pile of 'checks' stuck on the spike at home. Others bought 'faded' fruit - fruit with the damaged parts cut out and all learned where to find a good bargain. Children from the poorest homes learned the exact and sharp nature of their families' poverty by having to ask for credit. Mothers presumably thought shopkeepers would deal more sympathetically with a child asking for credit than with an adult. Respondents look back at the pre First World War credit system with rather different views. Some have sympathy for the shopkeepers whom they felt were frequently swindled by their more dishonest/impoverished customers who never settled their debts and who regularly 'disappeared'. A large number remember with bitterness the 'Belly Bibles' in which their families' debts were recorded. They still believe that the little corner shops which gave

credit made a fortune out of charging high prices and cheating their customers by keeping inaccurate records. One old woman said with considerable bitterness about her local shopkeeper, 'I never forgot her cheating me.'⁴⁵ Rather fewer families went to the pawnbroker's as compared to the shops which offered credit. It was unusual for a child to go on behalf of the family, and only a tiny minority remember doing this. Usually mothers went, or alternatively used a 'runner' who, for a small fee, took several families' bundles, thus saving them the embarrassment, or even disgrace of being seen entering the pawnbroker's.

V

As children learned various ways of balancing the family's budget they were learning, simultaneously, about work. Fathers (and in textile families mothers) worked a 55½ hour week before 1914, and were obviously absent for long hours each day at work. Mothers at home rarely ceased from their endless round of domestic toil. Children very soon realised that just as their families belonged to the working class so too they, as individuals, belonged to a working social unit, the family. There was no obvious division between the world of childhood and the adult world of work. It was however, for obvious reasons the world of domestic work which first impinged upon children. It is difficult to think of any household task which was not done by some child in some family, at some time. Children, according to their age and aptitude, were expected to carry out a wide range of tasks. They learned not only the importance of hard work if the family was to be fed, clothed and kept clean, but also that they, as individuals, had a vital role to play in that work.

Did this work in any way condition working class children into their adult roles? Certainly they grew up with a belief in the value and importance of work. It is also possible to trace the conditioning of girls into a female role and boys into a male role. Obviously all children who had both parents absorbed the model of father going out to work and being the provider, while mother stayed at home and was the manager. Even in the minority of families where mother worked full-time (and she was unlikely to work on this basis throughout a child's life) she still carried the ultimate responsibility for feeding and clothing the family and for keeping

it clean. Although in some families (especially where there were only boys) there was no obvious differentiation between boys' and girls' tasks; in other families there were clear differences between the boys' roles and those of the girls. While girls acted as their mothers' apprentices or even their substitutes, boys were more likely to be out of the house doing the shopping, helping with the allotment or accompanying male members of the family on some expedition like walks, fishing trips or food gathering forays.

You were saying about going out for long walks. Did the girls ever go out for these long walks or was it just the boys?

No. The girls never seemed to go out for walks they were always busy sewing and one thing and another.⁴⁶

It was usually assumed that boys would lead this freer, less home bound existence, but it was sometimes deliberate parental policy. One father, with five daughters and one son, said, 'I'm not having him growing up a cissy with all these females', and while insisting he helped with the cleaning also took him himself for long walks.⁴⁷ In other families not even a minimum of household work was expected from the boys.

Did she expect the boys to do anything about the house?

She didn't. She wasn't having her boys Mollies, she expected me to do everything, and I did.⁴⁸

Mrs A.'s mother had very bad knees and the girls had to help:

We all had our certain work, one would have the brasses to clean, and one would do the washing up ... we all had our work to do. We always had summat to do every night, each one of us. Did she make the boys do the same as the girls? Well the boys went out playing football and she didn't seem to bother with the boys. They used to chop the wood and fetch the coal in ... that was their work.

It is interesting that Mrs A. assumed that when speaking of 'all' in connection with housework she actually meant all the girls.⁴⁹

While boys were learning, probably subconsciously, that their role was out in the world as a 'provider', girls were absorbing the message that their place was in the home; some enjoyed their domestic work, others disliked it. They were not of course simply learning their future roles, they were also absorbing a vast amount of practical knowledge, which would be of great practical value when they themselves became housewives and mothers. They acquired both confidence in the handling of small children and babies and they also learned to refer to mother (or her substitute) for advice in child rearing. Working class mothers can be contrasted with middle class ones as portrayed by Patricia Branca in *Silent Sisterhood*, the latter presumably being denied, by the presence of servants, the opportunity of bringing up small relatives when children themselves, and as adults appearing to rely a good deal on the advice offered in women's magazines. Working class women were more confident and relaxed but less free to innovate, being circumscribed both by the advice and example handed on by their mothers.

Contemporary observers and historians have not been in agreement about the value of this early training of both boys and girls in household work. Helen Bosanquet was enthusiastic about the value of domestic tasks for children. 'Little duties about the house, little services to other members of the family are possible from a very early age and contribute far more than any direct teaching can do to make the child realise how social life depends on mutual helpfulness.'⁵¹ Possibly this observation was true *when* the duties remained little ones, but the burden of work and responsibility undertaken by some children, more especially girls, was very heavy and they appear to have had little childhood. Life was all work with little time for play or relaxation. Mrs G. said of her sister 'One had to do all the work, and that was the eldest one. She was a slave really and had to help.'⁵²

In examining working class parents' attitudes to children, one is constantly surprised to see how much was expected in the way of work and responsibility. This assumption of adult responsibilities by children was an old tradition and has been commented upon by Pinchbeck and Hewitt. Although their comments apply to an earlier period they would still seem appropriate for late Victorian and Edwardian England. 'Children were expected to accept the hardships of life at a very tender age and at the

earliest opportunity to accept the responsibilities of the adult.'⁵³

VI

It was these working class attitudes and assumptions which greatly perturbed an increasing number of philanthropists and social reformers in the nineteenth century. These 'child-savers', inspired by such writers as Wordsworth and Rousseau, saw the child as an innocent being requiring protection and indeed isolation from the cruelties and hardships of the adult world. Increasingly young people also came to be included in this group which required special protection, guidance by, and total dependence upon, caring adults.

This group of child-savers worked firstly to keep children out of undesirable employment, especially at a young age, and secondly to get and keep them in schools for longer and longer periods. By 1900 this group had an impressive array of legislation to its credit; children were excluded from the mines, the ages at which they could begin and the hours worked in the mills were restricted, and by 1899 the compulsory school leaving age was fourteen (although there were several areas of exemptions). This important movement of social reform has been extensively written about but rather less has been heard from those who were the recipients of the legislation.

Working class poverty is a constantly recurring theme in any study of the socialisation of working class children and youth. Poverty obviously affected working class parents' attitudes to their children working. In the presence of large families and the absence of servants, children obviously had to undertake many household tasks. Because parental incomes were low, it was vital in many families for children to earn wages as soon as they were able. Added to these financial imperatives was of course the working class devotion to the work ethic, which made work seem morally valuable for its own sake. Rowntree wrote 'The importance attaching to the earnings of the children in the families of the poor, reminds us how great must be the temptation to take children away from school at the earliest possible moment in order that they may begin to earn.'⁵⁴ It is clear that later Victorian and Edwardian parents welcomed their children's earnings and this undoubtedly produced at best unenthusiastic attitudes towards continuing

education for working class youth. Legislation whether about working conditions or compulsory education did not of course prevent children from working. It is clear that many children (possibly as many as one third in the North West), almost always boys, worked part-time out of school for wages from as young as nine years. This estimate comes from oral evidence and accords with that of Reginald Bray who in 1910 calculated that 25 percent of London children had jobs outside of school hours.⁵⁵ This evidence contrasts sharply with that of a report in 1908 which found only nine percent of children working outside school hours.⁵⁶ Standish Meacham regards this as an underestimate⁵⁷ as was indeed that of the Schools' Medical Officer of Health for Lancaster.⁵⁸

Many of the boys were involved in some aspect of the retail trade and will be familiar to readers of Charles Booth and Robert Roberts: 'Well before they left school, boys from the undermass had been working part-time in shops or as street traders of some sort.'⁵⁹ What is notable about these young part-time workers is their belief that they were playing a valuable and important role in the economy of their families. One boy who delivered meat in Barrow was partly paid with a joint and sausages and he firmly believed that he was feeding his family from Sunday to Tuesday every week.⁶⁰ A Lancaster man cheated his employer (though not very seriously), but justified his actions on the grounds of providing essential help for his family.

I used to count eggs coming in from the farmers. The farmers' wives used to come in with baskets of eggs. He used to say, 'Will you come and count Mrs. Jackson's eggs, Ernie?'... I used to say 'So many dozen and half a dozen chipped ones'. What I used to do, the large ones, I used to catch them on the side of the box. 'The old horse's done some jogging this morning!' ... I'd put any eggs away ... Did he give you the eggs? I got them cheaper, ... I thought I was doing something great for home, for mother.⁶¹

Part-time work usually meant that the boy worked for a few hours a week, but it could mean in extreme cases a virtually full-time job on top of his schooling. The most exploitative job and one regarded as such by the respondents was selling newspapers.

I started at 6 a.m. and met the newspaper train. After sorting out bundles of papers I set out on my round ... and then back to the station to run alongside the trains to sell papers, cigarettes and sweets. I was set free at 8.50 to go to school ... After school I had tea and then back to Hymans finishing at 8 p.m. Saturday I would go 6 to 1.30 and 3 to 8, which was a weekly total of 42½ hours outside school ... After about 2 months my mother ended the job as she said I was costing more in shoe leather than I got in wages.⁶²

He claimed he earned only threepence a week which seems incredible but the same earnings were reported by a Preston newspaper seller. However small their wages, children were proud of their achievement and acutely aware that every penny counted in their mothers' budgeting. One girl who worked all day Saturday in the market earned one shilling and added 'I was keeping the house with that shilling.'⁶³

While the exploitation of these children is obvious in many cases and cannot be ignored, neither can the feeling of pride and achievement so frequently expressed. The entry of many boys into a full-time job in the adult world of work was eased by their experiences as part-time workers from an early age. Historians have commented upon the distancing between parents and children, indeed between almost all adults and children.⁶⁴ But it is also clear that there was an absence of intergenerational conflict. One of the reasons for this relative harmony could be the lack of distinction between the world of working class childhood and the adult world of work.

VII

It is clear that the majority of working class parents (and consequently their children) did not have a deep attachment to education, or any great confidence in its advantages. There is some evidence that in the years immediately after the introduction of compulsory state education in 1876, there was parental opposition to it. In London some parents regarded compulsory education as a threat to themselves because it prevented their children working for wages.⁶⁵ The long struggle of London attendance officers to raise the attendance rates from 76.7 percent in 1876 to 88.2 percent in 1906 was fought mostly with the poorest classes.⁶⁶ Oral

evidence, while not revealing overt working class hostility to the principle of education, especially for younger children, (although there was some hostility towards individual teachers), certainly reveals a widespread attitude that apart from instilling the 3Rs education had little to offer the working class child.

Education was less important than family needs, and this attitude could affect the working class child's schooling in different ways. Firstly, children, and most especially girls, could be kept at home to help. A Preston woman spoke of her mother, 'She had to stay at home and look after ten children, therefore she could hardly read or write, ... she never went to school because she was just a little drudge.'⁶⁷ Mrs A. in Barrow said of her mother's confinements, 'M'father used to go and bring this lady and she used to come every morning just to wash the baby ... I'd stay at home and look after the others, m'dad and look after m'mother.'⁶⁸

Secondly, and not surprisingly, there is little evidence of working class children either taking up the free places in grammar schools or staying on at school a day longer than was legally necessary. (In 1908 only 1.5 percent of fifteen to eighteen year olds were in grammar schools).⁶⁹ Grammar schools were rejected because they involved the cost of books and uniform and they implied that pupils would stay on at school until sixteen. From the oral history sample for the period before the First World War there are many examples of children either refusing even to bother taking the scholarship exam to the Grammar or Higher Grade Schools, or if they passed not telling their parents. One Barrow man commented

I think about 6 got in (to the Grammar School) ... to me it was no good at all because we had no room to study at all. We had no light, we used to have a bit of a candle or a lamp. We didn't light the gas, because we couldn't afford it.

Did your parents say they wanted you to go or did they not mind?

They didn't know anything about it. I left school when I was 13 and I went as an errand boy at the Co-op.⁷⁰

In a few cases parents wanted their children to go to the Higher Grade School but the children themselves, imbued with the work ethic, rejected this.

Mrs H. rejected her parent's pleas: 'I wanted to leave school, I wanted to go to work.'⁷¹

It is difficult to suggest that in the sphere of secondary education girls were treated more unfairly by parents than were boys. In fact the only respondent from the sample from the pre First World War period who enjoyed a grammar school education (and later training as a pupil teacher) was a woman. (The particular mother's determination to get her children to do well led her to open a parlour shop to finance their education and four out of five became teachers).⁷²

The third result of working class attitudes to education was that many children left full-time schooling as soon as it was legally possible to do so. The school leaving age was raised to fourteen in 1899, but part-time exemptions were permitted under local bye-laws from the age of eleven for agriculture and from twelve under the Factory Acts, provided *either* a standard of efficiency was reached and a labour exam passed (the system which was used in Barrow and Lancaster), *or* a required number of school attendances had been achieved (the system used in Preston).

A very high percentage of respondents in Preston who finished at school before 1914, left as half-timers to work in the mills at twelve and started full-time work at thirteen. So did thousands of children in the textile areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire where families, despite many criticisms by social reformers, continued to exercise this right until after 1918 when it was abolished. As the editor of the *Preston Guardian* noted in 1911, Preston parents were not in favour of the law abolishing the half-time system.⁷³ It is clear from the oral evidence that the overriding concern of such parents was to get their children working and earning as soon as possible.

VIII

Not all children were of course half-timers; indeed, the great majority in the country as a whole were not. It is clear from statistics that the local tradition for a child to leave school the day he or she was fourteen was in fact a national trend. Figures demonstrate how very few children remained in school after their fourteenth birthday, the great majority preferring to be out at work.

Those who left school as rapidly as possible showed little or no resentment of the fact, but

Table 1.1: Percentage of age groups in full-time education in England and Wales, 1870 and 1902 ⁷⁴

Age	Year	
	1870	1902
10	40	100
14	2	9
17	1	2
19	1	1

simply an acceptance of the financial realities of life and of the paramountcy of their parents' decisions. Familial needs continued to be more important than individualistic concerns. Mr C. was a highly intelligent respondent, with several books to his credit, and I asked him if he would have liked to have stayed at school longer.

I hadn't any choice in the matter ... there was one occasion when they were wanting an office boy in the Goods Department on the railway where my father worked and if I had applied for it there is no doubt that I would have got it. But it would have meant a drop in wages of about 4s a week and the money was wanted at home so I stayed on at the mill. I don't regret it.

Why did you choose the mill?

I didn't choose it. It was simply that I was old enough to go to work. The mill was the usual thing for children to go to. I followed the usual trend.⁷⁵

Mr B. was sent by his father as a half-timer into the mill at twelve.

When I was 12 my father said to me, 'Thou comes with me on Monday morning and I'll learn you to spin.' There was no dispute, no argument. 'Do as you're told.' I had to go and learn with him to spin.⁷⁶

Mr S. started in the mill full-time at the age of thirteen and earned five shillings a week 'tenting', that is helping and learning from a weaver.

It was 6 to 5.30, five days a week and 6 to 12 on a Saturday.

Why did you choose to go into the mill?

I had no option. In fact when I was 13 the teacher had asked three of the boys to ask their parents if they could go in office jobs, one at a solicitor's office and I was one of them asked. Of course you would have to go in your Sunday suit if you were doing that kind of thing and mother said 'No you will have to go in the mill'. That were that so I went in the mill and I was there till 1916.

Would you have liked to have gone into an office?

Looking back on it, no. I don't think I would. Did your mother feel that she couldn't afford the suit ... was that what bothered her? It was definitely.⁷⁷

IX

Observable throughout the nineteenth century, amongst those who argued for a curtailment of working class children's participation in the labour market, was not only a genuine concern for the children's wellbeing but also a distinct fear that an early entry into the world of work would lead to the break up of the family and the growth of an independent and possibly delinquent youth. Charles Bray, in 1857, wrote of working class girls, 'If they had cause to be dissatisfied with the conduct of their parents they would leave them.'⁷⁸ In the same year J.S. Wright wrote, 'The going from home and earning money at such a tender age has, as might be expected, the effect of making the child early independent of its parents.'⁷⁹ These fears of youthful independence have been well documented and discussed.⁸⁰

In Edwardian times there was a mass of writing about the too early independence of working class children and their loss of childhood innocence and dependency. E.J. Urwick in 1904 wrote of 'aspects of man-child in whom the natural instincts of a boyhood are almost overwhelmed by a feverish anxiety to become a man.'⁸¹ Alexander Paterson observed: 'The difference between a child and an adult is everywhere regarded as one of degree rather than of kind.'⁸² These comments are simply representative of many others. It is indeed possible to discover examples of youthful independence in the sample; the

ten year old girl who against her father's wishes left school and went to work full-time in 1893, the twelve year old who had just started work and who demanded (and received) the same share of meat and fish as her parents, the boy who did not want to work in the mill and so sabotaged his loom. Some children, when once in work, began to criticise their fathers' (but hardly ever their mothers') behaviour. There was more open flouting of certain parental rules, notably those about the times for coming in at night.

But individual examples of independent behaviour in certain circumstances, should not be taken as indications of a generally independent working class youth. Indeed, in view of their early conditioning about the importance of obeying parents and of making their contribution to the family's well being, it would be unusual to find much real independence, still less youthful rebellion. Young workers may have earned a wage but this did *not* make them financially independent. There was an old tradition in Lancaster of all the family's wage earners giving their wages, unspent, to mother, who then decided how the income should be spent. Mr F. spoke for virtually all the respondents, 'I can always remember that my father always handed his wage over and so did the rest of the family. I never brought home my envelope opened. I brought my children up the same way and they handed their wages over.'⁸³ Young workers were given pocket money at the rate of a penny in the shilling depending on the family's meanness/generosity. Even in the days of very low prices it was difficult to be independent on a few pence a week. In the sample there are no cases of a young worker refusing to hand over his/her wages.

At the workplace the young worker was likely to find him or herself either working for a member of the family or for someone well known to the family. This person regarded him or herself as acting *in loco parentis* and was regarded as such by the young worker. This had the advantage of encouraging their relatively good treatment, but obviously inhibited their independence. Mr G. went to work in 1915, which is just out of the period covered by this book, but his evidence demonstrates the long survival of a custom first commented on by observers in the 1820s. Neil Smelser quoted from them, 'It is fathers or friends who work in factories and they all have a common interest in checking immorality among the younger assistants both boys and girls.'⁸⁴

Presumably immorality could cover all kinds of unacceptable behaviour. Mr G. said, about the woman who taught him weaving as a twelve year old, 'Well it was my aunt. Then when I went full-time I worked for two and the second one was a cousin of mine. She was much older than I was ... Then I moved up and I went with my father into the warehouse.'⁸⁵

There are no examples either of unmarried young workers leaving home to set up house independently, except in some special cases. 'Few children deserted their families, kin loyalty remained strong.'⁸⁶ The exceptions were young girls who went away to be living-in domestic servants, and young men who joined the armed services or who went to do farm service. In none of these cases would the young person be described as having an independent existence and these absent children still contributed to the family budget. In Barrow there were a large number of young men who were migrants and who were *not* living with their families: these, however, tended to be older men in their twenties who, having served an apprenticeship, were forced to move to find a suitable skilled job.

Two girls in the Preston sample, who had very difficult home circumstances, married very young, but the average age of women at marriage was 25-26 years, which suggests that the great majority of young people were living at home for a long period after leaving school.⁸⁷ Even marriage did not necessarily bring complete independence. Many young couples were forced to live with in-laws for some time as they had been unable to save much money for a house of their own before marriage. Once married they were not expected to hand over all their wages, but to pay a set amount for board and lodging and save the rest!

For the unmarried young person at home, there was little moral independence, despite the flouting of some rules already mentioned. The majority continued to live by their parents' rules and standards which had by now become internalised as their own. They accepted a significant degree of parental interference in their personal lives and many were undoubtedly influenced in their choice of marriage partner by their parents. The most extreme example of this kind of interference discovered in the sample was that of the grandmother of a Preston respondent.

She was a real old battle-axe. She brought up 7 children, six daughters and one son, my

father. Her husband died when they were all children ... My grandmother forbade her daughters to get married. Apparently she had had such a very bad time herself bringing up a family and also she had terrible trouble in childbirth and she decided that her daughters were not going to suffer as she had done and she absolutely forbade her daughters to have boyfriends or contemplate getting married. It was alright for m'dad, no problem for him. On the whole the maternal diktat was observed ... one kicked over the traces, left home and got married and she was the black sheep of the family ... her name had not to be mentioned.⁸⁸

And yet despite this lack of personal independence and personal autonomy, working class youth were not like their middle and upper class counterparts. They were not shielded from the adult world. They were forced to leave childhood behind, as contemporaries observed, in their desperate hurry to become men and women. But they were not adults in the full sense of the word, they were adults only in their earning power. It was poverty which so dominated the lives of working class families.

Finally, it is only if the deep abiding bond between the working class child and his family is understood, that the position of the young people in a wider society can be understood. On one hand the lessons of obedience, of conforming to the norms of respectability and of understanding the family's poverty tended to produce a conforming and conformist adult, frightened of being different, of being socially ostracised, frightened of being too radical at work in case of victimisation and the consequent loss of wages and possibly a job. But on the other hand working class children or young people were not entirely conformist and conforming. If they believed that their family's standards, whether moral or physical, were being directly threatened then they could and did act. Schools' moral standards were accepted as long as they reinforced those of the home. If they did not they could be challenged, usually by the parent and child acting together; protests were made about unfair or excessive punishments (when compared to those prevailing in the family). Later at work, the family's interests were very important. This usually meant conforming closely to the rules of the workplace and being deferential to those in authority. But occasionally a worker stood up for him or herself because he or

she felt their family to be threatened; Mrs H. stood up, for example, to a bullying tackler who was being difficult about repairing her loom, 'My mother couldn't afford to have my loom stopped ... It was urgent with my family at home that we had those looms going.'⁸⁹

The working class child and youth in the late Victorian and Edwardian period was wholly part of the working class family. The bonds tying young and old together would only weaken with the decline of poverty and the weakening of the strong traditional *mores* which ruled working class life, and neither of these processes are observable until well after 1914.

NOTES

1. James Walvin, *A Child's World: A Social History of English Childhood 1800-1914* (Harmondsworth, 1982), pp.12-13. This is one of the few books which attempts a history of English childhood. It is a stimulating book but there are points of difference between Walvin's interpretation and my own. Some of these are indicated in the text and footnotes. There is a dearth of published material on working class childhood and this makes comparisons between areas rather difficult. For this reason it is not easy to say whether or not my own empirical evidence is applicable to a wider area. References are made to work on other areas where possible. I. Pinchbeck and M. Hewitt, *Children in English Society, II, From the Eighteenth Century to the Children's Act, 1948* (London, 1973) is a fascinating account of children's lives, particularly as they appear in official documents. It complements this chapter which is essentially about the view the working class had of themselves and their lives.

2. University of Lancaster, Oral History Collection, S.S.R.C. funded projects, Elizabeth Roberts, 'The Quality of Life in Two Lancashire Towns 1890-1930', (1974-6); 'Working class social life in Preston 1890-1940', (1978-81) (hereafter E.R.). In a short chapter there is not the opportunity to develop an analysis of the use of oral material by historians. A comprehensive and useful survey of the achievements and possibilities of oral

history can be found in Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford, 1978).

3. Helen Bosanquet, a member of the Charity Organisation Society, based her book on the case study notes made by members of the society when visiting working class London families.

4. Philip McCann (ed.), *Popular Education and Socialisation in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1977), p.xi.

5. Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels; An Oral History of Working-class Childhood and Youth (1889-1939)* (Oxford, 1981), p.61. This is essential reading for anyone interested in working class childhoods. Again there are differences of interpretation and analysis between Humphries' work and my own, notably on the question of how far working class children were involved in stealing (see below). However, we would both argue that working class children and their parents were aware of a serious cultural clash between their values and those of the middle classes.

6. M. Pember Reeves, *Round about a Pound a Week* (1913; repr. London, 1979); *Family Budgets, Being the Income and Expenses of Twenty-Eight British Households 1891-4* (London, 1896); D.N. Paton, J.C. Dunlop and E. Inglis, *A Study of the Diet of the Labouring Classes in Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1902); J. Oliver, 'The Diet of Toil', *The Lancet*, June 29, 1895.

7. Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London* (London, 1889); also E.P. Hennock, 'Poverty and Social Theory in England: the experience of the 1880's', *Social History*, 1, 1976.

8. B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty: a Study of Town Life* (London, 1902), p.296.

9. Elizabeth Roberts, 'Working-class standards of living in Barrow and Lancaster 1890-1914', *Economic History Review*, xxx(2), 1977; Elizabeth Roberts, 'Working-class standards of living in three Lancashire Towns 1890-1914', *International Review of Social History*, xxvii(1), 1982.

10. Hugh McLeod, 'New Perspectives on Victorian Working-class Religion', (Unpublished History Workshop Paper, Sheffield, 1982); Robert Moore, *Pitmen, Preachers and Politics: The effects of Methodism in a Durham mining community* (Cambridge, 1974).

11. Standish Meacham, *A Life Apart: The English Working Class 1890-1914* (London, 1977), pp.26-9. This is essential reading and one of the best books on working class life in this period.

12. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of The English*

Working Class (Harmondsworth, 1968), pp.392-3.

13. Humphries, *Hooligans*, p.31; Walvin, *Child's World*, pp.183-5.

14. Walvin, *Child's World*, p.47.

15. M.L. Kohn, 'Social Class and Parental - Child relationship', in M. Anderson (ed.), *Sociology of the Family: Selected Readings* (Harmondsworth, 1971), pp.323-37.

16. Alexander Paterson, *Across the Bridge or Life by the South London Riverside* (London, 1911), p.16. This is one of several contemporary books written about the social conditions and problems of the Edwardian working class. Paterson's book is about working class men, women and children in south London. Books concentrating on the lives of boys and young men in London include R. Bray, *The Town Child* (London, 1907); R. Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship* (London, 1911); E.J. Urwick (ed.), *Studies of Boy Life in Our Cities* (London, 1904). A. Freeman, *Boy Life & Labour: The Manufacture of Inefficiency* (London, 1914), while drawing his evidence from Birmingham, displays the same concern about the welfare, education and job opportunities for working class youths as do the other writers.

17. John R. Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770-Present* (London, 1974), p.120. This is a stimulating account of both working class and middle class youth and is again essential reading.

18. Meacham, *Life Apart*, p.160.

19. E.R., Mrs W.2.B., p.19. B.1889, father a shipwright, mother ran a fish and chip shop (with children's help). 15 children, 10 grew up.

20. E.R., Mr S.I.P., p.35. B.1900, father a horseman, mother in domestic service before and after marriage. 4 children.

21. E.R., Mr T.I.P. B.1897, father a soldier, then a docker. Mother a winder. 17 children born, 13 survived.

22. Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (Harmondsworth, 1973), p.45.

23. Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* (London, 1975), p.60. This book uses as one of its sources interviews carried out with some 400 respondents throughout Great Britain. There are interesting and illuminating sections relating to Edwardian childhoods. Thea Thompson was also involved with this research project and describes parts of it in her book, *Edwardian Childhoods* (London, 1981), a collection of

memories of childhood in the respondents' own words.

24. Paul Thompson, 'The War with Adults', *Oral History*, 5(2), p.3.

25. Board of Education, *Annual Report for 1910 of the Chief Medical Officer*, PP.1911.

26. E.R., Mrs W.4.P., pp.43-4. B.1900, father a bricklayer, mother went out cleaning. 10 children, 8 survived.

27. E.R., Mrs W.I.P., p.37. B.1899, father a stoker in the gasworks, mother dead and respondent brought up by grandmother. 9 children, 8 survived.

28. E.R., Mrs M.6.P., p.31. B. 1904, father a docker, mother a weaver. 5 children, 4 survived. Some historians have expressed scepticism about this lack of knowledge on sexual matters in working class children and young people. Given the overwhelming oral evidence indicating ignorance, it is impossible for me to do other than report it. It is possible that in country areas, ignorance was not so widespread or profound: Arabella in T. Hardy, *June the Obscure* could be mentioned in this context!

29. E.R., Mrs G.1.B., p.3. B.1888, father a fitter and turner. Mother no occupation outside home. 16 children, 11 survived.

30. Walvin, *Child's World*, p.135.

31. E.R., Mrs M.3.P., p.45. B.1898, father a docks' checker, mother a cleaner. 7 children, 3 survived.

32. Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London, 1982), ch. iv. This book is principally concerned with middle class girls, but does have some analysis of working class girls' lives. It is very useful for comparisons between the different class approaches to the education of girls.

33. E.R., Mrs S.4.L., p.46. B.1896, father a gravedigger, mother a washer woman. 9 children.

34. E.R., Mrs M.3.L., p.17. B.1917, father a fitter, mother died. 8 children.

35. For a very thorough examination of illegitimacy, see P. Laslett, R. Smith and K. Osterveen (eds.), *Bastardy and its comparative history* (Cambridge, 1980).

36. E.R., Mr T.3.P., p.48. B.1886, father a labourer, mother took in washing. 7 children, 4 survived.

37. Roberts, *Slum*, p.57.

38. Humphries, *Hooligans*, p.151.

38. Humphries, *Hooligans*, p.151.

40. E.R., Mr T.2.P., p.64. B.1908, father a slasher's labourer, mother a weaver. 7 children, 5

survived.

41. Walvin, *Child's World*, ch. 2.

42. Meacham, *Life Apart*, p.199.

43. E.R., Mrs G.I.B., p.9.

44. E.R., Miss T.2.B., p.20. B.1888, father a manager of the corn-mill, mother a cook after being widowed. 13 children (including 8 step sisters).

45. E.R., Mrs S.3.P. in C.3.P., p.42. B.1892, father a carder, mother a weaver. 8 children, 6 survived.

46. E.R., Mr B.4.P., p.9. B.1896, father a beatler (in the bleach works), mother a fowl dresser. 10 children.

47. E.R., Mrs P.I.L., p.105. B.1898, father a foreman in the linoleum works, mother a housewife. 5 children, 1 died.

48. E.R., Mrs P.2.P., p.49. B.1907, father a sketching master in mill, mother a shopkeeper. 6 children, 4 survived.

49. E.R., Mrs A.3.B., p.28. B.1892, father a caretaker and boilerman, mother a washerwoman. 9 children, 7 survived.

50. Patricia Branca, *Silent Sisterhood: Middle Class Women in the Victorian Home* (London, 1978) contains a description of the development of working class attitudes to motherhood in ch. iv.

51. Bosanquet, *The Family*, p.305.

52. E.R., Mrs G.I.B., p.6.

53. Pinchbeck and Hewitt, *Children*, II, p.368.

54. Rowntree, *Poverty*, p.60.

55. Bray, *Boy Labour*.

56. Nettie Adler, 'Child Employer and Juvenile Delinquency', in G.F. Tuckwell (ed.), *Women in Industry* (London, 1908), p.132.

57. Meacham, *Life Apart*, p.175.

58. The Lancaster Schools' Medical Officer of Health reported in 1911 that 260 boys and 24 girls out of a total of 8,097 children were employed out of school hours.

59. Roberts, *Slum*, p.157.

60. E.R., Mr M.I.B. B.1892, father a railway labourer, mother a housewife. 12 children, 10 survived.

61. E.R., Mr H.3.L., pp.1-2. B.1904, father a blacksmith, later handyman, mother a weaver. 4 children.

62. E.R., Mr I.I.L., p.2. B.1902, father a fireman, mother a housewife. 3 children.

63. E.R., Mrs A.2.B., p.6. B.1904, father a boilermaker's holder-up, mother a domestic servant.

4 children.

64. Meacham, *Life Apart*, pp.158-60.

65. Gillis, *Youth*, pp.65-6.

66. David Rubinstein, *School Attendance in London 1870-1904* (Hull, 1969), p.112, and ch.vii.

67. E.R., Mrs C.3.P., pp.1, 4. B.1897, father unknown (Mrs C. was illegitimate), mother a weaver. 1 child.

68. E.R., Mrs A.3.B., p.4.

69. G.A.N. Lowndes, *The Silent Social Revolution* (Oxford, 1937), pp.78-90 and A.M. Halsey (ed.), *Trends in British Society since 1900* (London, 1972), p.163.

70. E.R., Mr M.I.B., p.15.

71. E.R., Mrs H.2.B., p.140. B.1885, father a carter, mother took in lodgers. 4 children.

72. E.R., Mrs M.3.B., *passim*. B.1886, father a shipwright, mother a small shopkeeper. 10 children, 5 survived.

73. *Preston Guardian*, June 4, 1910: see also Meacham, *Life Apart*, pp.172-3, and Harold Silver, 'Ideology and the factory child: attitudes to half-time education', in McCann (ed.), *Popular Education*.

74. D.C. Marsh, *The Changing Social Structure in England and Wales, 1871-1961* (London, 1965), p.218.

75. E.R., Mr C.I.P. pp.30-31. B.1884, father a railway worker (labourer to foreman), mother a weaver before marriage. 6 children, 4 survived.

76. E.R., Mr B.8.P., p.2. B.1896, father a mule spinner, mother died. 6 children.

77. E.R., Mr S.I.P., pp.13-14.

78. Charles Bray, 'The Industrial Employment of Women', *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Sciences*, 1857.

79. J.S. Wright, 'Employment of women in the factories in Birmingham', *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Sciences*, 1857.

80. Victorian fear and anxieties about the independence of working class youth are examined and documented in, *inter alia*, Gillis, *Youth*; Frank Musgrove, *Youth and the Social Order* (London, 1964); Meacham, *Life Apart*.

81. Urwick, (ed.), *Boy Life*, p.xii.

82. Paterson, *Bridges*, p.38.

83. E.R., Mr F.I.P., p.48. B.1906, father a poultry dresser, mother a washerwoman. 5 children.

84. N.J. Smelser, *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution: An Application of Theory to the Lancashire Cotton Industry 1770-1840* (London, 1959),

p.190.

85. E.R., Mr G.I.P., p.2. B.1903, father had a variety of jobs in the mill, mother a weaver. 8 children, 6 survived.

86. Gillis, *Youth*, p.10.

87. These figures were calculated according to a formula given and used by J. Hajnal, 'Age at Marriage and Proportions Marrying', *Population Studies*, 7, 1953, pp.111-36.

88. E.R., Mr S.4.P., p.17. B.1915, father a pattern maker, mother a housewife. 2 children, 1 survived.

89. E.R., Mr H.I.P., p.9. B.1911, father and mother pub keepers. 15 children, 10 survived.

Chapter Two

HEALTH

F.B. Smith

I

Ten years ago an essay on 'Health' would have been inconspicuously absent from a collection such as this. Traditional medical history presented as a narrow inventory of great men and their deeds had little to offer the student of the thoughts and doings of the people or, indeed, their rulers. Similarly, historians of sanitary reform had concentrated upon embattled heroes such as Edwin Chadwick, and preoccupied themselves with legislative forms and administrative stratagems. Their studies proceeded upon the assumption that enactments and orders worked in the manner in which they were intended: the particular impacts of these changes upon groups and localities over time remained generally unexplored.

The traditions of celebratory medical intervention and sanitary progress were plausibly joined in the work of G. Talbot Griffith and M.C. Buer, who published books in 1926 that were to remain influential for fifty years.¹ They were deeply impressed by the successes of British preventive medicine, therapeutics and surgery during the Great War, and by the triumphs of sanitary improvement that had preceded it. They retrojected those successes back into the earlier nineteenth century, heedless of chronology, and invoked medical prowess, the growth of the voluntary hospitals and sanitary reform to explain the fourfold increase of population since the Industrial Revolution. We now know, thanks to the critical work of Professor Thomas McKeown, that this interpretation is largely baseless, although it retains its Old Believers among economic historians, historical demographers, and medical antiquarians. In fact, the doctors were

powerless to cure illness or specifically prevent disease, except in the case of smallpox. The hospitals had too few beds, about 12,000 in 1861,² to make much difference to the containment of infectious disease. From what we know of the hospitals before the implementation of antisepsis and asepsis in the 1880s, they did their patients little good. Similarly, sanitary improvement in the shape of domestic provision of safe water and milk to a majority of town populations, efficient disposal of sewage from all areas of the towns, the control, through bye-laws, of damp and access to air and sunlight in dwellings, and the protection of foodstuffs against contamination, did not become widely effective until the 1880s. The chronology of these developments precludes their having had any sizeable effect upon the increase of population in the century after 1760.

The doctors' contribution came in a different form. Many of them were in the vanguard of the local and central campaigns for better sanitary services. The true medical heroes of the nineteenth century are the medical officers of health and the numerous local general practitioners who courageously goaded local authorities into raising the rates and enforcing new sanitary bye-laws and standards. Their story has yet to be written.

Recently, historians have begun to weigh the life chances of individuals, families and occupational sets by analysing variations in morbidity and mortality through time, and by attempting to reconstruct lay and professional notions of health and ill-health, the pursuit of the first and the acceptance and management of the latter. It follows that the new history declares a new range of priorities, for historians at least: a concern with endemic, chronic illnesses and the relegation of epidemics.³ This makes the historians' job harder: evidence about chronic illness is much more diverse, obscure and patchy than the relatively abundant, chronologically and aetiologically circumscribed, evidence for epidemics, replete with bizarre anecdotes. Nonetheless the inescapable priority is that during every twenty four months in the later nineteenth century more infants died from diarrhoeal infections than the whole mortality, about 140,000, from the four great cholera outbreaks which hitherto have preoccupied historians. (They have been really only preoccupied with the first, and not the worst one, of 1831-2 and this for its supposed impact upon the national political crisis and not as a mortality and

morbidity crisis in itself).

It is odd that historians have been slow to explore such a controlling element in human experience as everyday health and ill-health, particularly when a distinguished line of investigators of current problems in community health, including Dr William Farr, Sir Arthur Newsholme, Dr G.C.M. McGonigle and Richard Titmuss had long furnished an agenda and a method.⁴ The historians' slowness to ask fresh questions is sad testimony to the staying power of received ideas.

II

The years between 1880 and 1914 are the crucial ones in the great transition from the age-old pattern of mass morbidity and mortality occasioned by infectious diseases, poor nutrition and heavy labour, to the contemporary assemblage of functional disorders, viral disease and bodily decay associated with old age. Above all, this period covers the decisive fall in infant mortality and the emergence of the present dispensation, entirely novel, so far as we know, in the history of the world, under which death occurs preponderantly in later adult life. These changes represent the greatest improvement in life chances in British history, but historians have paid small attention to them. Marxists have consistently obscured the issue because diminished mortality rates and increased longevity among all classes under nineteenth century industrial capitalism fundamentally challenge assertions about the inevitable *verelendung* of the working classes. Right wing historians also distort the problem because they attribute the improvements, without showing how, to the providence of the market, whilst evading mention of public intervention and redistribution as necessary and beneficent mechanisms.

The putative causes of this transition are complicated and vary in their results by sex, class, age and locality. One leading cause is improvement of the environment. Its association with the dramatic reduction in mortality from typhus and typhoid fevers, for example, seems indisputable. Typhus is transmitted through body lice among people with low resistance resulting from poor nutrition and shelter. In the 1860s the London Fever Hospital is said to have admitted 2,000 cases a year.⁵ By 1880 the incidence had fallen to 530 reported deaths in England and Wales and by 1914, with four deaths, it had ceased to be endemic in Great Britain.⁶ Ireland,

which was said to supply many of the victims in Britain, also showed an improvement over the same period from 934 deaths to 45.⁷ The clearing of rat infested rookeries and dank, unsewered courts that proceeded in fits and starts from the mid 1870s must have done much to remove the condition under which the lice could flourish. The dislodgement of typhus represents a major amelioration in the life chances of the poor because the disease killed them at a rate of about one in four and left survivors debilitated and open to other life threatening infections. Well fed and sheltered victims, from what we know of contemporary cases, must have come through with less damage.⁸

The important point about the removal of damp and delapidated housing is that local authorities and private entrepreneurs were guided in their decisions to clear 'overcrowded' areas by the local mortality statistics. In this way relatively small outlays of money upon very small areas (although the numbers of people forced to shift without help with rehousing ran into tens of thousands) yielded great reductions in endemic, infectious diseases.⁹

The containment of typhoid fever depended upon the wider provision of safe domestic water and milk supplies and the change to more thorough systems of sewage and waste removal. Typhoid is conveyed in water, milk and food contaminated by the faeces and urine of patients and carriers. Its incidence declined as mains water supply developed and bye-laws governing the handling of milk and food were elaborated and enforced. These services in turn underpinned the increasingly familiar usage of personal cleanliness through washing with soap (although this change in behaviour is likely to have affected the incidence of contagious typhus and dysentery more nearly than water-borne typhoid). Soap consumption in the United Kingdom doubled from eight pounds per head in 1861 to 15.4 pounds in 1891, and declined slightly to reach about fifteen pounds per head in 1907, after which consumption levelled out. France, by contrast, was reported to consume one third less soap per head in 1881. The French continued to rely on perfume while the healthier English must have smelt of coarse soap.¹⁰ Typhoid mortality in England and Wales declined dramatically. By 1906-10 it was down to 70 per million and represented 1,900 deaths over the four years, or a saving of over 4,000 lives per year as against 1875.¹¹ The crucial importance of effective sewage disposal and drainage systems is demonstrated by the typhoid mortality

Table 2.1: Typhoid mortality in England and Wales, 1875-1910

Years	Rate per million
1875	370
1881-5	210
1896-1900	110
1906-10	70

rates before and after reconstruction schemes: at Merthyr Tydfil, for instance, the rate fell from 215 per million to 86 per million and at Ely the rate was halved from 104 per million to 45 per million. This repulse of the disease, as with other infectious diseases during this period, was achieved without any useful development in therapeutics.

The general reduction of the typhoid rate proceeded despite the persistence of widespread 'overcrowding', meaning, according to the official definition, the occupation of a single dwelling unit by more than one family. In the Black Country over one fifth of the urban population was 'overcrowded'; on Tyneside it was one third. Overall, the number of persons per dwelling in England and Wales was reduced only very slowly and remained at 5.05 in 1911.¹³ Nonetheless, it seems probable that the fabric of the housing of the people improved: put very simply, new houses were being built at a faster rate than the rate of increase of the population of Great Britain.¹⁴ This new housing, subject to local bye-laws about access to sunlight, water and sewage services, and precautions against dampness, as a component in the general enlargement of opportunities for domestic cleanliness, must be invoked when one considers the decline in mortality of typhoid fever and the other infectious diseases. Drier housing and sunlight were the important contributions, rather than the reduction of 'overcrowding' which so preoccupied contemporaries and which engendered misguided campaigns for 'slum clearance' in this century.

The scarlet fever mortality rate in England and Wales among children under ten, the most vulnerable group, ran at 210 per million in 1871. It dropped to 140 per million in 1881, that is 17,400 deaths a year, to level out in the mid 1890s at 35 per

million, or about 4,000 deaths a year, a horrifying number, but still representing a huge saving of young life.¹⁵ Epidemiologists are agreed in attributing the reduction to a decrease in virulence of the causative agent, the haemolytic streptococcus. Certainly this huge diminution in the death rate was achieved before effective therapeutic procedures were devised, although this is true of almost all the major killers discussed in this chapter. I am inclined to add to the epidemiologists' interpretation of this decline an emphasis upon legally imposed standards of cleanliness in dairies and milk marketing which contributed to reducing prior and cross infections. This began to become effective in the 1880s.

As with other infections, whether airborne as scarlet fever usually is, or conveyed by milk and food, scarlet fever mortality had its worst incidence and lingered longest in the Black Country and the Durham and Welsh coalfields.¹⁶ Yet in terms of wages these were among the more affluent parts of working class England and Wales (although less so in the Black Country where miners' wages were lower than elsewhere) especially during this period. Presumably coalminers' families were at least as well sheltered as the families of less skilled and poorer workers, and, of course, warmer, and because they paid relatively lower rents, a larger share of their wages was available for food.¹⁷ In these instances, poverty was not the prime determinant of ill health and death. We do not know enough about these places to say why this was so. Mining villages were distinctively male dominated and rough in everyday behaviour and sports. The infant and child death rates in the Welsh valleys suggest that religious adherence did little to lift the value set on life. There is a seeming paradox between the high male cohesiveness in the workplace, trade union branch and club, much celebrated by novelists and historians, and the seeming unconcern with municipal improvement and sanitary services, which only A.J. Cronin among the writers, has depicted. Perhaps the dramatic dangerousness of mining induced a dull stoicism which kept expectations low and reduced the value placed on individual lives, especially those of non earning women and children (although mining was absolutely less dangerous, and fast becoming ever safer in terms of lethal accidents, than the work of slaters and roof tilers, lead workers, bridgemen and dock labourers, and seamen, whose accident death rate was a terrible 75 percent

higher).¹⁸

Whooping cough also declined steadily through the period from a reported peak of about 1,450 per million in England and Wales in the late 1860s. Again the decline accelerated in the mid 1890s when the mortality rate fell from about 1,200 per million in 1890 to 1,000 per million in 1900, to continue down to about 680 per million in 1910. This represents a reduction from over 13,000 deaths a year in 1880 to 8,700 in 1905.

Scotland always had a higher reported mortality rate for whooping cough than England and Wales, and the transition to a lower rate came later, between 1906 and 1910. Particularly in the Scottish cities, it outlasted scarlet fever and typhoid to emerge, with measles, to which it was often the sequel, as a major killer of young children. Even in 1914 there were over 1,300 deaths. By contrast, the Irish rate was reportedly always about half the British rates, but like the Scottish rate, the transition to a new, low level still half that of the British, did not come until 1907. Forty percent of the deaths in the United Kingdom occurred at under twelve months and 95 percent at under five years.¹⁹ Whooping cough was not a notifiable disease and the reported rates, especially when we recall that other infections such as measles were often also involved, are probably seriously under-registered throughout the period. It is a distressing disease which parents and doctors are impotent to alleviate. The sources of its decline still baffle epidemiologists. Like the other infections, its diminution began before its causative organism, *bordetella pertussis*, was identified in 1906, although morbidity from the disease, as with diphtheria, remained high into the 1940s. Whooping cough is spread by droplet infection and we know that it was most common among children sleeping in crowded dwellings (indeed, recent findings suggest that it is seven times more common in crowded families).²⁰ 'Overcrowding' does seem to be the crucial element here, although the decline in case mortality during the twentieth century remains to be explained.

Measles and the secondary infections and sequelae it brought with it remained a serious threat much longer into the twentieth century. Its death rate for England and Wales ran at between 1,200 and 1,000 per million until 1910 and remained close to that level until 1914, when a dramatic fall set in to reach 350 per million in 1930. Before 1914 this rate meant over 9,300 deaths a year in

England and Wales in bad years such as 1900, and over 800 deaths in Scotland, equalling 470 per million, compared with 360 in Ireland, where the rate was 143 per million.²¹ Compulsory school attendance for tens of thousands of children and their return to mix daily with tens of thousands of younger siblings at home enlarged and concentrated the pool of susceptibles. But that does not explain the rapid fall in mortality rates after 1914 and the significantly lower mortality throughout the period in Ireland.

Here, as elsewhere in British - meaning southern English - history, Ireland provides checks and clues. Between 1891 and 1911 the proportion of the Irish population under fourteen was in step with that of the English and Welsh, while Ireland and Scotland had similar total numbers and proportions under fourteen. Irish wages were lower, 'over-crowding' in Dublin and Belfast was widespread, and charity, in a generally poorer economy, was probably more austere. The diet of the Irish working classes was probably more monotonous than that of their English counterparts, yet its bases in milk, potatoes and bacon probably made it more sustaining. I shall return to this point later. We know that among malnourished children in contemporary poor countries measles and its associated secondary infections is still a life threatening illness with a case mortality rate of 25 percent.²²

However, if proportionately more Irish children had sufficient resistance to live through measles and diphtheria attacks they paid for it in other ways. The published data on Ireland are sparse and difficult to interpret, but one set of figures, at least, suggests that in 1891 Irish children under fifteen years were reported as 'deaf and dumb' at 0.0457 per million - that is, 700 children, or double the rate for England and Wales and slightly higher than for Scotland. On the other hand, Ireland had a rate of about 30 percent fewer children reported as 'blind' than did England and Wales and about twenty percent fewer than Scotland, although Ireland unhappily made up the difference at up to six times the rates for Great Britain among older age groups.²³ This disproportion must have been aggravated by higher emigration rates among the Irish able-bodied. But throughout the Kingdom the health levels of poor and working class children were low. In Glasgow in 1903-4 40 percent of board school children were reported as suffering from 'defective hearing', while sixteen percent of ele-

mentary school children in London in 1909 and another sixteen percent in Manchester and Birmingham in 1912-13 were reported to have various forms of severe respiratory impairment. Twenty years earlier about eleven percent of London elementary school children were reported to exhibit 'deviations from the normal nerve state' and a further eleven percent showed 'bodily defects'.²⁴ At present our understanding of the causes, manifestations and outcomes of these chronic conditions is rudimentary. Simple ascriptions of mortality or morbidity to 'measles' or 'scarlet fever' hide the crucial interplay of cross infections (let alone wrong diagnosis) and the importance of predisposing factors such as poor nutrition, coarse nurture and tiredness, and the little understood or reported debility and sequelae. This high incidence of physical incompetence among the working classes and poor retarded their learning, their acquisition of work skills, their prowess in sport and their capacity to enjoy life. During this period, as during the preceding centuries, endemic ill-health must have played a fundamental part in keeping the poor in their place.

In Great Britain the largest gain in life during this period, among young adults at least, came from the retreat of pulmonary tuberculosis. In 1870 the rate for England and Wales was reported at about 2,410 per million living, in 1880 it had fallen to 1,869, and in 1892 it plunged to 1,634 per million and thereafter diminished at a more gradual rate. Scotland had always reported a slightly higher rate, from a bad peak in 1870 of 3,900 per million until the decisive downturn in 1909.

Table 2.2: Pulmonary tuberculosis mortality in Scotland 1870-1910

Year	Rate per million
1870	3,900
1880	3,000
1890	2,600
1900	2,300
1909	2,000
1910	1,700

In England and Wales this advance represented a saving by 1910 of over 70,000 lives a year on the

rates for 1851-60.²⁵

The decline in the incidence of all forms of tuberculosis, although much accelerated in our period, continued a trend that had probably begun with the first growth of the industrial economy in the later eighteenth century. The causes of this decline remain a mystery. There were no effective therapies or isolation procedures in the nineteenth century and the system of dispensary attendance and sanatoria residence, the therapeutic results of which are also arguable, developed fully only after the World War.

Morbidity from pulmonary tuberculosis probably also declined through the century and again at an accelerating rate during our period as the chances for continual exposure to active cases and repeated infection from droplets and dust diminished. But post mortem and later x-ray discoveries of healed lesions showed that there was still a lot of tuberculosis about and that mass infection was still the norm.²⁶ Improved nutrition and shelter and reduced hours of labour and exhaustion among the working population must have increased their resistance. The incidence of all forms of tuberculosis among infants under twelve months fell much more slowly than among other age groups, until the transition in 1906. Here the important contribution seems to be the spread during these years of effective pasteurisation of milk. But our knowledge of the extent of mortality and morbidity of all forms of tuberculosis remains very inexact. Mortality was undoubtedly under-reported, among infants particularly, and we can only draw up crude estimates of adult morbidity for a short time around 1900 from a few dispensary enrolment records based on insecure diagnosis of segments of the general population of Great Britain. Nonetheless those segments represent the lower middle classes, working classes and the poor, and therefore contain a cross section of the classes most at risk. These reports suggest a figure of about 30,000 active cases in Scotland and about 270,000 in England and Wales.²⁷ Appalling though they are, these estimates must be understatements; yet they also indicate that Britain had the lowest tuberculosis morbidity and mortality rates in Europe. The important point is that this advance represents an enormous lessening in misery among all classes, and among the working classes and poor especially. Members of artisan families died from reported pulmonary tuberculosis in Birmingham, Manchester, London, Aberdeen and Dublin at about twice the rate

of members of professional families. And those who died in 'bad areas' died at a third higher rate again than the artisans. The disease hit hardest at the fifteen to 45 age group, those at the height of their working lives.²⁸ The long periods of impaired earning ability, and then the two and a half to five years of increasing debility before death, especially when it occurred among bread winners, often brought destitution. The reduction of tuberculosis mortality and probably morbidity in our period not only reduced misery but it greatly stabilised income among all classes, among the working classes in particular. It must, moreover, have issued in a considerable augmentation to the national wealth.

The exception to this happy picture is once again, Ireland. There, the mortality rate from pulmonary tuberculosis actually rose through the period, a pitiable distinction in Western Europe which Ireland shares with Norway. This change, from a rate of 2,600 per million in 1870, to 2,900 per million in 1880 and no real fall until 1906, when the rate, at 2,800 per million was still higher than Scotland's and remained so through the present century, is as yet unexplored. I shall be writing about these questions elsewhere and have not the space to pursue them here, but three points need to be made. The first is that the Irish rates are, like those for other diseases, inflated by the emigration of the young able-bodied, although we must remember that Great Britain also lost many similar people. Nonetheless, if tuberculosis is spread in an environment of poor nutrition, poor shelter, and overcrowding leading to poor resistance and repeated reinfection of susceptibles, then Ireland represents a fossil phase of the health history of the United Kingdom from which England and Scotland and, to a lesser extent, Wales, had emerged. Moreover, pulmonary tuberculosis rates were over twice as bad among the huddled poor in Belfast and Dublin as in the thinly populated west.²⁹

Ireland, by contrast, maintained a lower infant general mortality rate than Great Britain throughout the years to 1914, as table 2.3 shows. The decisive fall in Scotland and England and Wales occurred around 1902, from peaks of 137 per thousand in 1897 in Scotland and 163 per thousand in 1899 in England and Wales.³⁰ I have discussed this changed pattern elsewhere and cannot rehearse the details here.³¹ But the contrast between Ireland and Great Britain is too striking to be passed over. We need to explore variations in the practice of breast

Table 2.3: Infant mortality rates per 1,000 births in the United Kingdom, 1870-1914

Years	Ireland	Scotland	England and Wales
1870-80	95	123	150
1881-90	95	120	143
1891-1900	105	124	153
1901-1905	93	120	138
1906-12	92	112	116
1913-14	90	109	103

feeding. Good evidence about infant nurture in Ireland is not easy to find but we have numerous indirect remarks by informed observers which suggest that breast feeding was customary among mothers of all social ranks, except in protestant Belfast. Other observers noted that breast feeding seemed to be more common in Scotland than in England and Wales.³² We also have inferential claims that breast feeding in England was least common and practicable in small manufacturing and textile towns. These might well be true because the claims were made by informed observers, but ultimately they are derived tautologically from the mortality rates for such places, which were up to 100 percent above the urban average.³³ Beyond this, we know that illegitimates, wherever they were born, had a 100 percent worse chance of survival than legitimates and that the rates within towns varied by up to 300 percent between babies born in wealthy suburbs and those born to tenement dwellers.³⁴ But this important, neglected subject needs detailed, critical and comparative investigation.

Illnesses conveyed by contaminated cows' milk, condensed milk and water, and other foods handled by members of families in which diarrhoeal infections were endemic, seconded by house flies nourished on the horse manure of the roads and stables, culminated every summer in mass infant deaths. Particularly hot summers as in 1893, 1895, 1899, 1904, 1906 and 1908 saw the infant mortality graphs mimic the temperature charts. In cool 1907, for example, there were 17,283 deaths at all ages (but overwhelmingly infants) reported from diarrhoeal

diseases in England and Wales; in 1908, 26,879. Nonetheless the decisive decline which began in 1902 in all three nations of the Kingdom occurred mainly among victims attributed to 'marasmus, atrophy and debility' and not among reported diarrhoea cases, where the rates remained roughly constant, or among infants dying of 'prematurity and congenital defects', where indeed the rates increased.³⁵ If 'marasmus' and 'atrophy' are indices of neglect, their diminution should indicate better mothering and nurture, and this improvement was possible when the age of the women at marriage rose, when the spaces between pregnancies became longer, and when the size of the completed family was reduced. 1901-2 in England and Wales and 1903-4 in Scotland appear to be the culminating years in that long advance of artificial, effective contraception founded upon time honoured natural methods and supplemented by continued high abortion rates which we can perceive among professional middle class families in 1851 and which were adopted among the working classes gradually after 1876, the peak year in nineteenth century fertility rates. The interplay of economic forces and private motives in this transition is intricate and largely irrecoverable, but the survival of more children within the family, the advent of compulsory school attendance after 1880 and the restrictions on child employment impelled the working classes to join the middle and upper classes in the process of inescapable transfer of intergenerational wealth, with the result that their children, like those of their betters before them, were rendered both more expensive and the bearers of their parents' enlarged ambitions in an era of rising real wages. There has been much speculation about the ideological changes which made possible or at least accompanied this demographic transition, and 'secularisation', 'urbanisation' and 'industrialisation' have all been invoked.³⁶ I have elsewhere proposed secularism, in the sense of loss of belief in a providential order, as a contributing factor and do not wish to argue that proposition here.³⁷ But I want to suggest that attention should now turn from the middle classes' and artisans' changes in the 1850s and 1860s to the much larger change among the less skilled working classes in the first decade of this century, and that greater weight be given to the factor which demographers observe in contemporary societies adopting artificial contraception: the simple, rational appraisal among marriage partners of their immediate family interests and prospects.

Only among mining families did the number of births remain at the old high rates: and only in mining places did the infant mortality rates linger at the 1870s rates, and, indeed, increase in the Welsh mining valleys. Carmarthenshire, for instance, reported a rise of eighteen percent between 1876 and 1908.

Table 2.4: Births per 1,000 women aged 15-44 in the United Kingdom, 1876-1909

Year	England and Wales	Scotland	Ireland
1876	156.7	153.9	119.4
1886	140.4	142.2	103.1
1896	121.9	127.9	100.1
1901	114.5	122.1	96.2
1904	112.7	118.6	100.9
1906	109.2	115.8	102.0
1909	103.5	112.7	103.4

As the table shows, the birthrate in Ireland fell earlier than in Great Britain and remained steady at about the rate the English and Welsh finally reached in 1909. This was in part the outcome of an older population structure and the likely higher age at marriage of Irish women (we have at present inadequate data on this) although the age of women at marriage during this period also rose in England and Wales. I have found no contemporary suggestion that artificial contraception had much to do with it. It seems reasonable to propose that the probable higher incidence of breast feeding in Ireland which sustained the consistently lower infant death rate was itself facilitated by and, indeed, by reducing conceptions contributed to, the smaller size of the completed family. Throughout the United Kingdom the transition occurred before the widespread provision of infant milk depots, health visitors' schemes, and mothercraft centres. Indeed, many of the medical and philanthropic activists in these centres enjoined pro-natalism and thereby retarded the cause they ostensibly espoused. They lost in cloudy, eugenic beliefs the simple lesson of the mining towns that more lives saved and enhanced among a

smaller crop of babies would quickly produce a more competent population.

III

The long run of rising real wages enabled people in Great Britain to substantially change their diet, in part for better, but often for worse. Consumption of salt for cooking and condiment in 1887 was said to be about 40 pounds per head per year. The price had fallen to twelve shillings per ton from sixteen shillings in 1860 and domestic consumption had already doubled during that period. By 1889 the 40 pounds level had risen to a reported 62 pounds per head and in 1897 (the data are patchy) to 72 pounds or a scarcely credible average one and a half pounds per week (the figures very likely include some of the salt used in food processing, but this does not affect my argument about the general shape of the increase in domestic consumption). Consumption in France and Germany ran at under half these astonishing figures, which are also 300 percent greater than the currently recorded highest per capita intake, in northern Japan, the 'apoplexy country'. British consumption stabilised at around the 1897 figure, until about 1904 when it began slowly to fall.³⁹

Sugar consumption shows a like pattern. In 1870 it was reported at 47 pounds (both refined and unrefined) per head per year in the United Kingdom, in 1880 at 65 pounds (both refined and unrefined), 1890 at 71 pounds, 1900 at 85 pounds (refined and unrefined) and in 1905, at 70 pounds (refined only). Consumption per head in the United Kingdom was reported to be twice that of the next highest European domestic consumer, Denmark, and two thirds higher than that of France.⁴⁰ The 1880s and 1890s are the take-off years for mass produced jam and jelly crystals, and milk chocolates made from sugar, cocoa and condensed milk, together with cocoa based drinks made from sugar, flour and starch, and sweets confectioned from sugar, water, gelatine and artificial colours and flavourings.⁴¹ Sauces, relishes and essences based on salt, sugar, spices, starches and artificial colours and flavourings also emerged as mass consumption items often about 1880. This surge in consumption of sugar and salt as condiments may be related to the decline in the consumption of alcoholic beverages from the mid 1870s, which permitted the expenditure of a larger share of family

income on less socially deleterious sources of calories and appetisers. (Changes in the basis of excise calculations and its levels also affected the price of beer and generally led to reduced alcoholic strength).

The new sauces helped make palatable the meat which the people were consuming in gradually increasing quantities as its price decreased. Imports of meat and butter at declared value doubled between 1875 and 1895 and by 1905 had risen again by one third. The London wholesale price of 'inferior quality' meat fell from 4½d per pound in 1880 to 3½d in 1900, while consumption per head per year in the United Kingdom rose from 109 pounds in 1880 to 122 pounds in 1892 to 132 pounds in 1900.⁴² The meat was cooked on the new gas and coal stoves which became popular after the price of coal (London 'best coal' landed figures) fell by one third between 1874 and 1884, and thereafter to 1912 generally remained close to the 1884 figure of 16s 6d per ton.⁴³ Working class domestic cookery undoubtedly incorporated a wider range of comestibles and condiments, although this is not to assume that the food was greatly improved, as Mr Polly's dyspepsia attests.

This was also the age of new, mass consumption patterns of tobacco. In 1880 the population of the United Kingdom smoked 1.4 pounds per head per year. Thereafter consumption jumped as follows:

Table 2.5: Tobacco consumption in the United Kingdom, 1890-1910

Year	Pounds per head
1890	1.55
1900	1.95
1905	1.97
1910	2.00

The penny-per-five cigarette was introduced in 1888 and rapidly captured the market: in 1891 85 million out of the 126 million cigarettes purchased were penny ones. In 1910, after the method of measurement changed, 30 million pounds of cigarettes were sold, in 1914 50 millions.⁴⁴

The increased survival rates of susceptibles who formerly would have been lost in infancy or childhood, coupled with the new diet, produced a new

pattern of disease and disability that has persisted to the present, where coronary disease, cardiac disease, cancer and hypertension comprise the four leading reported causes of death. The two emerging threats were cancer and heart disease. In England and Wales between 1851 and 1880 reported male cancer deaths increased by 62 percent to reach 315 per million, while female rates rose by 43 percent to 662 per million. The fastest increase occurred at age 35 and above, at 59 percent. The reported cancers were still the well known ones, observable from the exterior of the body: in females, cancers of the breast and cervix; in males, cancers of the bladder, stomach, lip and mouth and rectum. Consonant with the new eating habits probably, and new diagnostic methods, the greatest increase showed subsequently in intestinal cancers in both sexes: males - 16.6 per million in 1868 to 185.5 per million in 1910, to 294.6 per million in 1915; females - 33.4 per million in 1868, to 124 per million in 1910, to 368 per million in 1915. Already in the 1890s deaths attributed to cancer had risen above 20,000 a year in England and Wales.⁴⁵ The cancer rates for Ireland, again probably related to the delay in mortality changes and a slower transition from the old diet based on potatoes, milk and bacon, did not begin to rise until 1877 and even thereafter continued at below the British rates throughout the period.⁴⁶ Significantly, in view of the tremendous increase in tobacco consumption, the reported incidence of lung cancers in England and Wales rose from 5.5 per million at all ages over 35 in 1868, to 18.4 per million in 1888, to 29.3 per million in 1901-10 to 36.4 (the civilian rate) in 1915. The rates among males were double those for females. Next to intestinal cancers, prostate and lung cancers among both sexes showed the fastest increase in reported cancers through the period.⁴⁷

Reported deaths from diabetes and renal diseases, which develop most commonly in people over 40 who are also obese, jumped by 100 percent for males 45-65 between 1870 and 1910, when the rate reached 415 per million, and rose by 400 percent for males over 65, to reach 731 per million. The great acceleration in the rate occurred in the mid 1890s. The rise among females was even more catastrophic: for women 45-65, from 37 per million in 1870 to 129 per million in 1910, a rise of 348 percent; and for women over 65, from 62 per million to 574 per million, a rise of 925 percent.⁴⁸ In Ireland the rise in these diseases began later and proceeded at

a slower rate, from 81 per million in 1908 to 92 per million in 1914.⁴⁹ As with cancer, one might have expected that the older structure of the Irish population and the removal of many of the hardiest, presumably, by emigration, would have brought the figures nearer to the British ones. But that is not the case and we are compelled to emphasise the importance of nutrition in these contrasts, coupled with the lesser pollution of Ireland relative to Great Britain with its numerous developing chemical industries.

High blood pressure, arterial disease, coronary disease and cerebrovascular disease again show an appalling rise, at least for England and Wales. The Registrar-Generals' figures are derived from widely varying criteria over time and are probably greatly understated. Nonetheless the English and Irish figures are all we have in a usable form but they do provide some idea of the dimensions of change: the figures are inflated by the decline in infant mortality, but not to the extent that the trend is falsified.

Table 2.6: Deaths from 'Heart diseases etc.' in England and Wales and Ireland, 1903-14

Year	Per million deaths at all ages	
	England and Wales	Ireland
1903	403	NA
1906	450	189
1909	481	206
1912	579	176
1914	636	181

Table 2.7: Deaths from 'Cerebral Haemorrhage, etc.' in England and Wales, 1903-13 ⁵⁰

Year	Per million deaths at all ages	
1903	403	
1905	434	
1907	477	
1909	506	
1911	513	
1913	563	

(The Scottish data were reckoned upon a different basis and barely acceptable figures for comparative purposes could not be produced without a vast amount of calculation).

These figures, taken with those for diabetes and cancer, suggest that between 1880 and 1914 the United Kingdom, led by England and Wales, experienced a revolution in diet and disease patterns very similar to that which has been happening during the last decade in, for instance, Papua New Guinea and Western Samoa, associated with greatly augmented intake of refined carbohydrates and decreased exercise.⁵¹

Two other diseases emerged as killers and disablers during this period, although they have no demonstrable link with dietary changes and altered ways of life. The first is influenza which apparently mutated in about 1890 and suddenly became virulent, after 50 years of relative mildness. In 1890-92 110,000 deaths in England and Wales were attributed directly to it, principally among infants and persons over 55. It must also have helped to lift the death rates reported among sufferers of pulmonary tuberculosis, pneumonia and whooping cough.⁵² Waxing and waning, influenza was to remain a threat to life, a debilitating precursor to other infections, a source of mental depression, and a major cause of lost work time to the present. Among the working classes especially it must also have inflicted recurring shortfalls in family income: it was a malady which did not carry compensation. Poliomyelitis was first reported as a killer andcrippler of children between five and ten in 1911, when there were 206 deaths in England and Wales.⁵³ Its occasional epidemics were to remain as a dreadful threat until the advent of Salk vaccine in the mid 1950s.

Possibly because greater numbers of mentally handicapped children were surviving and adult insane persons were living longer, and certainly because institutions to receive them had been erected and extended in the 1880s, the number of persons certified as of 'unsound mind' in England and Wales rose to its highest ever rates, around 3,500 per million, between 1894 and 1904. By 1914 the rate was at 3,710 per million, which meant about 138,000 human beings. Between the late 1890s and 1914 there was a huge rise in admissions to the newly capacious asylums. Hitherto only half the known persons of unsound mind had been institutionalised but after 1900 the proportion ran at about two thirds.⁵⁴

The anxieties among the ruling and professional classes about the mentally incompetent extended to the physically incompetent too. As more chronically weak children survived, so these classes saw the need to investigate the incidence of poor eyesight and hearing, head lice, body sores, adenoids, infected tonsils, and anaemia and to treat these conditions by inventing new categories, inspections, compulsory washings and dabbing with ointments and frequent surgery. The Idiots Act was passed in 1886, the Lunacy Act in 1890, the first Royal Commission on the Deaf and Dumb reported in 1893, and an Education Act for Defective Children was carried in 1899. The misnamed Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration sat through 1904. The rejection rates of volunteers for the Boer War and the ravages of typhoid fever among the troops in South Africa helped fuel the reformers' anxieties and enlarged their demands that taxation be spent on promoting health among mothers, infants and school children.⁵⁵ But the drive to create these health promoting activities and institutions for the chronically sick predated the Boer War disillusionments by over a decade as the dates of the legislation listed above indicate. School health inspections, school meals, national insurance support for consumptives, the elements which comprise the emerging social service state, were the outcome of the great health transition and developed in essentially similar ways after the transition in other European countries, North America and Australia. The redistribution entailed in the social service state did help to increase resistance and thereby eradicate rickets and reduce the incidence of tuberculosis through the 1920s and 1930s. Other illnesses associated with prolonged deprivation also gradually disappeared during the 1920s as living standards rose: tertiary syphilis, gout, strangulated hernias, displaced uteruses were all less frequently reported.⁵⁶ But, as more susceptibles lived longer, rheumatism and other slow-acting degenerative diseases became more common.

Nonetheless, the generation raised during the transition, which reached manhood in 1914, was the biggest and most vigorous that the United Kingdom had ever seen, as were their fellows in Western Europe, Australasia and North America. Officers and private soldiers in the armies of the Great War incarnated the twin ideals of health that sanitarians had promoted since at least the 1860s. As Charles Kingsley had preached in 1872, the higher order of

health approximated to that exhibited in statues of classical Greek athletes. This higher order was the exemplar for the classes emerging from the flourishing public schools. They were to be the bearers of social duty and high national aspiration. Through disciplined games, restraint in eating, drinking and carnal pleasures, and bodily cleanliness they had to ascend to that 'chaste healthfulness' which ensured from compliance with the 'laws of nature which are the voice of God.' The classes' sinewy, strong bodies, seconding quick and honourable minds, would produce that 'tender grandeur' which would retain for them their moral authority among the democracy. Health was a state of political grace, won from within, embodied in male musculature and female *tournure*. The masses were directed to a different ideal. They were to be made 'large, strong, ruddy, cheerful, active, clear-headed for their work'. They were to eschew drunkenness and care better for their offspring and dwellings.⁵⁷

By 1914 these ideals had in large part been achieved. Only fit and dedicated men could have endured, indeed maintained, the terrible war that engulfed them. Weaker men from weaker nations in eastern and southern Europe and the African and Indian colonies dropped out first. Their stronger comrades, newly emancipated from the hazards of typhus, cholera and scarlet fever, were preserved for decimation at the Somme and the Marne. Their younger siblings and the women who survived them, and their children in turn, were to enjoy increasing life expectancies (and expectations from life) in ever growing proportions through the twentieth century. Over half the female cohort born in Great Britain in 1891-1900 could expect to live to 50 years of age; the cohort of 1901-10, to 52; the cohort of 1920-22, to almost 60; that of 1950-52, to 71; that of 1970-72, to 73. Their male contemporaries began in 1891-1900 with almost two years less life expectancy, at around 48½ years, and thereafter higher incidences among them of cigarette smoking, war casualties, traffic and industrial accidents retarded the male rate of increase, so that it did not reach 67 until the 1970-72 cohort, a life expectancy truncated by six years as compared with the female level.⁵⁸ Since then, the spread of cigarette smoking among young women, together with other self-inflicted risks, has tended to narrow the gap.

This transformation in life expectancies has issued an intricate set of alterations in life

chances which historians have barely begun to explore. Among them are extensions in the span of active working lives; increases in production made possible by stronger, healthier (and more experienced - if set in their ways) workers; the steadily growing numbers of people retired or widowed, liable to the physical and social disabilities attendant upon ageing; and the belated social and official condonation of birth control. These changes have profoundly affected family life, patterns of work and trade union activity, distributions within the domestic and national economies and public expectations and values. Beyond these, there are many other important but less obvious outcomes worth investigation: one is the probable increase in attention and income which parents and grandparents in all classes devote to children in smaller families; another is the possibly very considerable redistributational effects of wives outliving their husbands in a society which pays pensions and levies relatively low duties on transfers of marital property at death; a third set derives from the altered patterns of death and disease that came in with the transition - for instance, a changed emphasis upon individual responsibility for maintaining a healthy body or at least keeping a seedy organism going, co-existent, paradoxically, with public underwriting of advice and treatment; or, another instance, the redirection towards cancer of the old public and private fears about infectious diseases and tuberculosis; and, one final example, the changed management of illnesses which proceed episodically or chronically, by contrast with the traditional ones which were lingering, largely beyond palliation, and which were charged with dramatic climacterics.

One fundamentally important element in the distribution of life chances remained, it seems, little affected by the transition. The huge differentials in morbidity and mortality rates between classes I and V that prevailed in 1880 continued in much the same ratios through to the 1920s, the 1950s and to the present. While the prospects of the majority of infants, mothers and middle aged men and women in all five classes have improved enormously upon the chances of their ancestors, the grim fact endures that despite decades of social engineering and expensive medical intervention people in class V experience higher morbidity and mortality rates than people in the other classes. The patterns of illness, and of disability and of causes of death have changed, but the inequalities persist: death

rates still bear an inverse relationship to income levels.

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Chapter Three

WORK

John Benson

I

The historical study of work has been unduly circumscribed. It has been restricted by a definition of work so narrow as to exclude activities other than those 'directly rewarded in a financial sense', an exclusion which has resulted, most strikingly, in the virtual neglect of women's 'non-market household labour'.¹ Even the study of paid work - the subject of this chapter - has been restricted by the interests and preoccupations of those who have undertaken it. Economic, business and labour historians alike have tended to limit their attention to skilled, organised workers in the expanding, mechanised, capital intensive, modern sectors of the economy - to industries such as coal, cotton, the railways, engineering and iron and steel - where growth appeared the most dynamic and/or industrial relations the most bitter. This perspective too is seriously misleading; for so long as the 'economy is thought of in terms of a division between the "modern industrial system" and an array of "pre-industrial" "survivals" (always on the point of extinction, but still miraculously there a generation later), the effect will always be to marginalise the latter - to assign one sector disproportionate importance because it points to the future and to relegate the rest to a rapidly dissolving past.'² Even historians studying the modern industrial sectors of the economy, have tended to view work, not from the work bench or shop floor, but from the standpoint either of the directors' board room or of the union head office. Thus in coalmining - perhaps the most intensively studied of all industries - a great deal is known about the institutional structure of work, about trade unions,

conciliation boards and other bargaining organisations, but next to nothing about what minework actually entailed, about the grinding, dirty, dangerous jobs that were the daily lot to the rank and file miner.³

It is only recently that a new generation of historians has begun to escape some of these limitations and tried to examine the complex history of work itself. Dissatisfied with the existing historiography, scholars such as Patrick Joyce and Richard Price have attempted to reconstruct the working experiences of ordinary men and women; to examine the challenge to which traditional labour controls were subjected; and to assess the impact which the resulting struggles had upon the development of class and political consciousness.⁴

Fortunately, much of this revisionist activity has been directed towards the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries so that a good deal new is now known about the structures and processes of work between 1875 and 1914. Indeed it is even becoming possible to identify something approaching a new consensus, a consensus which suggests that during this period work underwent the most profound challenge and change. It is argued that there occurred a marked shift in the occupational structure; that the employers mounted an increasingly successful attack upon the craft controls of skilled workers; and that as a result the gap between the skilled and the unskilled became significantly reduced.⁵ In fact 'one of the most commonly accepted notions in the economic and social history of late Victorian and Edwardian England is that the working people were slowly but assuredly being moulded into a homogeneous working class which enjoyed a common work experience and outlook.'⁶ At last, then, this revisionist activity had begun to bear fruit; at last the impact of sectoral changes and new methods of production upon the working lives of ordinary men and women has begun to find a central place in the historiography of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain.

II

Historians of work have always laid great stress upon the structural changes which took place in the late Victorian and Edwardian economy. However unobservant in other respects, they have never failed to appreciate the significance of the shift in employment from the primary to the secondary and

tertiary sectors of the economy. Census analysis confirms that wage-earners were increasingly likely to find themselves working in mining, manufacturing or one of the service industries.⁷ Historians have emphasised too the decline in outwork and self-employment and the corresponding growth of larger, more capital intensive industries. Thus it is widely accepted that this period witnessed the final displacement of outworkers and small, self-employed producers of all types by the centripetal forces of urban, industrial development.⁸ Census analysis seems to confirm too the importance of other structural changes long recognised by historians of work: a reduction in the scale of both child and female employment and a certain expansion in the job opportunities open to working class women.⁹ Indeed it is to such structural changes in the economy that attention is drawn by those who view the period from 1875-1914 as one of dislocation and conflict.

Supporters of the new orthodoxy are able to point to other signs of change and of the emergence of a more homogeneous working experience: the leveling effects of new legislation,¹⁰ some diminution of regional wage variations¹¹ and, most crucially, a closing of the gap between skilled and unskilled workers. They argue that skill, whether genuine or socially constructed, was under sustained and successful attack and that this led to the progressive deskilling of working class jobs. The skilled worker, it is claimed, saw his job become increasingly subdivided, more closely supervised and then - the final indignity - redistributed among his semi-skilled and unskilled workmates.¹² There is no doubt that employers in certain leading sectors of the economy did mount concerted attempts to rationalise their work systems in order to circumvent the craft controls exercised by skilled workers. From the 1890s onwards employers in 'modern' industries facing increasing competition, tried to tighten their supervision both by the establishment of elaborate systems of rules and procedures and by the replacement of internal contractors and piece-masters, first by directly employed foreman and later by white collar personnel in central welfare departments.¹³ This closer supervision was often supplemented by the introduction of new methods of wage payment, most commonly of course by piecework, the system which Marx considered most appropriate to a capitalist economy.¹⁴ The combination of closer supervision and new systems of payment could be both stifling and offensive. In 1911 a factory inspector

discovered one firm employing over five hundred women in which each worker had to hand a tally to a male overseer whenever she went to the lavatory. The time spent in the lavatory was recorded and passed to the manager and at the end of the month the worker was fined if it was found that she had spent more than four minutes in the lavatory.¹⁵

Yet even this was not enough. In their attack on skill and their search for control over the labour process, the employers' most common strategy - and that which has received most attention since - was the introduction, or the speeding up, of machinery. Indeed it is often supposed that such technological innovation led generally to the intensification, division and deskilling of work. 'In virtually every industry', it is said, 'the cumulative effect of technological innovation throughout the nineteenth century resulted in the creation of a more homogeneous labour force.'¹⁶ New technology was introduced to a wide range of jobs: from printing to coalmining, from building to sailmaking, from ironworking to office work.¹⁷ But the industries chosen most often to demonstrate the onset of mechanisation are textiles, metals and engineering. There is a considerable body of evidence to support the view that in these industries at least formal apprenticeship degenerated and the gap between skilled and unskilled workers was narrowed by mechanisation and other managerial innovations, while in the economy as a whole 'pay differentials between occupations of various skills' which had 'peaked between 1851 and 1871, declined subsequently up to World War I.'¹⁸

Best known perhaps of all the evidence for the narrowing of the gap between skilled and unskilled workers were the developments taking place in industrial relations. It was during this period that trade union membership grew apace: from about half a million in the mid 1870s, to one and a half million in 1892, and over four million in 1914. The proportion of the working population which was unionised increased from just four percent in 1880 to nearly 25 percent in 1914. But it was not just that trade union membership was growing rapidly; even traditional, craft unions were ceasing to be the exclusive preserve of skilled workers. By 1914 a substantial minority of unskilled workers were union members 'and trade unionism had at last ceased to be largely the preserve of a privileged minority.'¹⁹ It was during this period too that in certain, leading sectors of the economy isolated, craft strikes

began to give way to industry-wide confrontation and to the establishment of industry-wide systems of collective bargaining. In coalmining the organisation of employers and employed in the central English coalfields led both to the growth of collective bargaining and to the proliferation of large, set-piece battles such as the 1893 Lockout and the 1912 Minimum Wage Strike. In engineering the reorganisation of the Amalgamated Society in 1892 was followed in 1896 by the formation of the Federation of Engineering Employers' Associations and, in the following year, by the national lockout of 1897-8. Even London building saw a marked change in the nature of its industrial disputes. The isolated, craft strikes of the 1890s gave way to industry-wide bargaining and the general building strike of 1914, in which the artisans finally abandoned their struggles for special treatment and joined forces with their unskilled workmates.²⁰

The period 1875-1914 is seen then as one in which work underwent profound challenge and change. Despite the iconoclastic views of historians like Eric Hopkins who believe that 'working conditions were improved in the second half of the nineteenth century',²¹ the whole weight of recent research suggests that, on the contrary, conditions deteriorated sharply between 1875 and 1914. It is pleasing that recent research has moved work back to where it belongs: at the centre of the historical stage. Work, whether paid or unpaid, visible or invisible, whether it took place in factory, fields or in the home, was always of crucial significance to ordinary people. Work, in the words of Patrick Joyce, 'got under the skin of everyday life'.²² Indeed according to Richard Price, work was so important that it is the key to labour's political, social and legal history. Political and class consciousness, he goes so far as to argue, can be understood only in terms of the labour process which, in its turn, 'under industrial capitalism can only be understood as a struggle for authority and control'.²³

III

If struggle and change constitute one major theme in the history of work between 1875 and 1914, then acquiescence and continuity certainly provide the other. For despite the welcome which must be afforded to recent studies of the labour process, too often they have had the effect of diverting attention away from the continuities which formed so

marked a feature of much late nineteenth and early twentieth century working life. Continuity, of course, always tends to be overlooked. Yet despite the comments of contemporaries and the observations of historians, most workers did not join trade unions and most remained remarkably little affected either by structural changes in the economy, by new legislation, by decreasing regionalisation, by closer supervision or by the introduction of more advanced mechanisation. More workers than we suppose continued to earn their living in much the same way, in much the same variety of jobs, as their predecessors earlier in the century.

Of course it would be absurd to deny that major structural changes took place in the British economy between 1875 and 1914. Yet it is misleading to overlook the continuing importance of the traditional, small-scale sectors of the economy. At least a seventh of the workforce was always employed in domestic and personal service while in many other parts of the economy - in building, inshore fishing, transport and services for example - increasing demand was met, not by that concentration of ownership and production that was so characteristic of the basic industries, but by the proliferation of any number of small units.²⁴ Even in the expanding manufacturing sector, large firms were confined to a relatively limited range of processes. Small firms continued to survive: as late as 1913 more than half a million people (nearly eight per cent of all those employed in manufacturing) were to be found in workshops with no more than four or five workers.²⁵

It is equally misleading to exaggerate the decline of self-employment. Even in the most mechanised, modern sectors of the economy few families were dependent simply upon the one or two jobs which they described to the census enumerator. Informal work patterns persisted: most families continued to derive at least part of their income from a whole number of different - and easily overlooked - occupations: from begging and petty crime, as well as from self-employment proper and from various kinds of small-scale entrepreneurial activity. Begging is one of the jobs which has been almost completely overlooked. In so far as it has received any attention at all, it has been viewed as a form of crime rather than as a job of work and has been regarded as the last resort of those on the margins of society.²⁶ This is doubly misleading. For while beggars were never reluctant to parade their physical infirmities and sick children, to tell tales of

tragedy or to exhibit their capacity for violence, this did not prevent begging from being a form of work - and often boring, distasteful and ill paid work at that.²⁷ Nor can it be maintained that begging was confined to those on the margins of society. Oral and autobiographical evidence confirms that, in the towns at least, beggars were drawn from the 'great mass of ordinary working people for whom...poverty provided the backdrop against which they played out their lives.'²⁸ They took to begging for food, goods, money or credit when times were hard and there appeared no obvious alternative. Arthur Harding remembers that his family turned first to its immediate relatives in the East End of London but that his father had no compunction in 'cadging' from complete strangers: 'the people in charge of the Mission gave him a ticket to go round the restaurants to see what they would give him in leavings.'²⁹ Naturally it is no longer possible, if indeed it ever was, to quantify the importance of an informal, casual and quasi-illegal activity such as begging. Nonetheless, it is clear that begging remained one of the many strategies of poverty: an expedient which, it is true, allowed a few people to avoid regular work, but which enabled many more to eke out a bare existence in times of particular distress.

Equally persistent and, until recently, almost equally overlooked was petty crime: the theft of such things as food and fuel, usually for consumption but sometimes for resale. Like begging, petty crime tended to be most common among the most disadvantaged: the unskilled, the unemployed and one-parent families. So here again, there seems little justification for identifying offenders as members of a distinct criminal class.³⁰ Every type of local economy seemed to sustain its own form of crime. On the coast there survived a deep-rooted tradition of plundering any wreckage washed in by the sea. In coalmining districts 'The "picking" of coal from pit heads and slag heaps was so deeply ingrained...that it formed part of the daily domestic routine for many children, who were expected to salvage coal both before and after school.'³¹ In the countryside there were 'innumerable opportunities for the plunder of its rich bounty.' Children pilfered fruit and vegetables as a matter of course on their way home from school;³² and, despite the risks, poaching proper remained common among the rural working class, particularly in isolated communities or those close to the suburbs of large towns.³³ Some chaps

lived by poaching, recalls a Kent labourer, but everybody used to do a little bit.³⁴ Despite some decline during the later years of the nineteenth century, poaching remained an accepted, everyday part of rural life.³⁵ Not that the growing towns and cities failed to offer their own temptations and opportunities. Children and adults scavenged from gutters, markets and rubbish heaps; they stole from their places of work and from the local shops. An Edinburgh boy remembers that in the early years of this century,

My mother used to send Jimmy or me for a bottle of Tizer or a couple of half loaves, a tin of milk, something like that you know, well Jimmy and me would work out a plan of action and go into a shop, to see if we could skim something off it, you know. And my mother she'd said get two applies, I've seen me coming back with four, a pound of tatties, coming back with a pack, that's half a stone I think. Things like that, see, we used to nab it, steal 'em in the shop. Pretty cheap but than people must have thought they were nae stealing.³⁶

In both countryside and town, on the coast and around the collieries, such petty crime continued virtually unabated. All over the country it continued to provide work and income for a large - though unknown - number of working class families.

Nor should it be assumed too readily that other, more conventional forms of self-employment were destroyed by improved communications and the spread of urban, industrial growth. Indeed recently completed research suggests that self-employment and petty entrepreneurial (or 'penny capitalist') activity survived among working people to an extent which has never before been recognised.³⁷ Although it cannot be proved that such forms of work survived unscathed into the twentieth century, it can certainly be shown that they were not destroyed by the centripetal forces of urban and industrial development. Thus what little statistical evidence there is suggests that petty entrepreneurial activity remained a widespread and vital component of working class life well into the twentieth century: between 1890 and 1914 at least forty percent of working class families engaged in some form of 'penny capitalist' work.

Some ten percent of the working population - chiefly middle aged, skilled men who had managed to

save some money - went into business in the hope of attaining independence from wage labour; it was part of their mid-life search for freedom from the restraints of factory and other work disciplines. They bought fishing boats, obtained smallholdings, started small building firms, began selling in the streets and, with their wives, opened small corner shops. But full-time 'penny capitalism' was always much less common than part-time. Skilled men, reluctant to abandon wage labour completely, went into business on a part-time basis. Even in engineering workshops,

Apprentices were encouraged to make tools, and although youths and fully rated men were not so encouraged, foremen generally winked at it when work was slack... "I haven't a job in the place!" many a foreman has said to me. "Go and make something for yourself, and be busy when the 'old man' come round, I expect there'll be a job in tomorrow."

The material could usually be "scrounged", but sometimes we surreptitiously extracted it from the stores. The "heads" rarely arrived until nine o'clock, so the pre-breakfast period was spent on "contracts," "jobs for the king," or "foreigners," as such jobs were colloquially called...

"Contracts" were not confined to small tools. Sets of fire-irons and dogs, toasting-forks, kitchen shovels, and ornaments of novel design and ornate handles, brass, copper, bronze, and gunmetal candlesticks, photo frames and mantelpiece ornaments, door-knockers, model engines for the son, were some of the "foreign orders" executed in the bosses' time.³⁸

However the vast majority of working people turned to part-time 'penny capitalism', as they did to begging or petty crime - simply to cope with the persistent, nagging poverty of underemployment. More often than not, it was intended to prevent things getting worse, rather than to make them get better. Consequently part-time 'penny capitalism', like petty crime and begging, was typically the resort of women and children, the casually employed and the unskilled. In Barrow-in-Furness, Lancaster and Preston between 40 and 42 percent of working class mothers engaged in some form of part-time 'penny capitalist' activity after marriage; they took in washing, put up boarders, sold home-made

food and drink, and opened parlour shops.

The persistence of begging, petty crime, penny capitalism and other forms of self-employment makes it necessary to treat with profound scepticism any belief that levels of female and juvenile employment were relatively low during this period. Even according to the census returns a third of women aged ten and above, and a seventh of children aged between ten and fifteen, were working at the beginning of the present century.³⁹ But any argument based upon the census is bound to conceal the true extent of female and juvenile labour. Not only did the census exclude unpaid, domestic activities; it also underestimated the amount of paid work performed by women and children. The census always tended to underrate the incidence of women's, and particularly of married women's, part-time work. Thus in the course of her detailed oral investigation of turn of the century Barrow, Preston and Lancaster, Elizabeth Roberts discovered that

The local census figures show that very few married women were in full-time employment outside the home...only four of the respondents' mothers out of 75 earned a full second income for the family. There were, however, 24 others employed on a casual part-time basis. Their occupations are not enumerated on the census returns but their financial contribution to their families could be of considerable significance.⁴⁰

In the same way, the census always tended to underestimate the extent of child labour. Many children began to work for money long before they left school. Girls went baby-minding and helped their mothers with home, as well as with house work; boys ran errands, washed windows, took on milk and paper rounds and worked on the land. An investigation carried out in 1908 revealed that almost a tenth of the country's two million school children worked outside school hours, a figure which, high though it was, excluded half-timers, street traders and no doubt beggars and petty criminals as well.⁴¹ Although such early twentieth century evidence can throw little light upon the alleged decline in the employment of women and children between 1875 and 1914, it does challenge most strongly the view that juvenile and female employment was relatively unusual during this period. It shows that, largely unknown to census enumerators and historians alike,

at least a third of adolescent children and a third of their mothers were still engaged in some form of part-time, paid work during the first decade of the present century. In this respect, as in so many others, the historiography of late Victorian and Edwardian work stands in need of substantial modification.

Another aspect of the historiography that requires revision is the suggestion that during this period the working experience of ordinary people became markedly less heterogeneous; that there occurred in particular a significant narrowing of the gap between skilled and unskilled workers. The evidence brought forward by proponents of this view is far less compelling than it at first appears. Contrary to general belief, legislative action did little to stimulate uniformity of working experience. Factory, workshop, mining, children's, trade union and employers' liability legislation all tended to be complicated and/or ambiguous. Enforcement was difficult. Workers were fearful and ignorant of their rights; employers and magistrates were often hostile; government inspectors were hindered both by bureaucratic restraints and by their inadequate numbers. 'The whole system of inquest and inquiry is so rotten and obnoxious', complained one trade union leader, 'that working men are afraid to give evidence for prosecution or compensation.'⁴² At the beginning of the period one Black Country inspector claimed to be responsible for 10,000 workshops while as late as 1905 there were just 151 inspectors to supervise a total of 255,000 registered workplaces: an average of more than 1,750 each.⁴³ The consequences were predictable. The constant evasions of the law, especially by small employers, show once again how undue concentration upon the activities of large firms in leading sectors of the economy can reinforce the beguiling - yet misleading - impression of an increasingly homogeneous workforce.⁴⁴

Nor is there any reason to suppose that the development of a more homogeneous workforce was aided by any marked diminution in regional variation. Nineteenth century industrialisation had produced a number of specialised regional economies; and regional - not to mention intra-regional - diversity remained one of the outstanding characteristics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century British economy.⁴⁵ There remained wide variations in the scale and concentration of production, in degrees of mechanisation, in the

recruitment methods and wage systems adopted, and in the workers' levels of earnings. Regional wage differentials remained stubbornly persistent. Farm labourers in Oxfordshire earned only two thirds as much as those in County Durham; miners in Somerset and North Wales brought home no more than three quarters as much as their colleagues in the Midland, South Wales and Northumberland and Durham coalfields. Thus it has been found that a recent attempt 'to elucidate regional economic structures in Victorian Britain...justifies, and indeed requires, disaggregation at regional level'.⁴⁶

The closer supervision and new methods of payment associated with the doctrines of systematic management were adopted in only a minority of firms, in a minority of trades such as textiles, engineering and metalwork. Internal subcontract systems survived even in textiles and remained common in parts of ironworking, building and civil engineering, pottery, shipbuilding and coalmining; in 1908 a quarter of the entire labour force in Black Country coalmining was still working under the hated 'butties'.⁴⁷ Even the few industries which adopted piecework and similar systems of payment, did not do so comprehensively. As late as 1914, 54 percent of fitters in the engineering industry and 63 percent of turners were still not on piece rates. And even when piece rates were introduced, they were sometimes successfully resisted. In the building industry, for instance, every union, at one time or another, fought the introduction of piecework - indeed this was said to be one of the few issues on which even Applegarth had been prepared to fight. Such resistance makes it easy to forget that the vast majority of workers, on farms and building sites, in shops, private houses and on the railways, remained quite unaffected; they continued to be paid in the same ways as had always been the custom.⁴⁸

It is equally easy to overestimate the extent to which employers introduced mechanised production and thus to exaggerate the division and deskilling of working class jobs. Even in industries such as textiles and engineering, which were at the forefront of technological change, mechanisation proceeded at a halting pace. The bulk of engineering work continued to be produced, not in large runs by unskilled workers on specialised machines, but in small batches by skilled workers using general purpose machines. In the textile industry in 1911 there were still fewer than 5,500 fully automatic Northrup looms out of more than 800,000 in weaving

as a whole.⁴⁹ In other parts of the economy the spread of mechanisation was slow indeed. The great mass of workers, whether skilled or unskilled, remained unaffected in any direct way by the profound consequences of the consolidation of modern factory industry.⁵⁰

So although it is undoubtedly possible to point to signs of an increasingly homogenous workforce, this would be seriously misleading. A careful examination of the available evidence shows that rather than coming to share a common experience and outlook, the workforce remained remarkable for its heterogeneity. There remained, for example, a wide gap between male and female workers; a vast gulf between the unskilled and the skilled, who managed to retain some considerable control over their working lives. What is striking is not the growing homogeneity of work experience, but rather its persistent diversity. Women continued to be subordinate at the workplace. They remained confined overwhelmingly to the same narrow range of low status, low skill, low paid jobs in textiles, dressmaking and domestic service. Although attitudes towards married women's work were by no means uniform, there survived an assumption, common to both sexes, that a woman's work and wages were temporary and/or supplementary to a man's.⁵¹ Even where wage rates were nominally equal, there were all sorts of ways of depressing women's earnings by unofficial means. In the North Staffordshire pottery industry, for example, custom decreed that women were not allowed to earn more than their male colleagues: female tile makers were forced to stop work by the men in their shops if it was found that their dexterity was enabling them to exceed male earnings.⁵²

Just as enduring as this sexual division (and sometimes congruent with it) was the gap between unskilled and skilled workers. In his recent, pioneering study of skill in manual labour, Charles More concludes that while 'it would be unwise to make any general comments about changes in the average level of skill during the nineteenth century there does seem a *prima facie* case for saying that the evidence does not support a thesis of unilateral decline.'⁵³ Thus although it is true that in many of the older crafts there did take place a slow decline in formal, indentured apprenticeship, this method of training survived because it continued to meet the needs of both sides of industry. At any time early in the present century there were still at least 340,000 apprentices in training, largely in

engineering, shipbuilding, printing, building and woodworking. However in many of the newer industries - papermaking, milling, footwear, clothing, food manufacturing and the precious metal trades - skill was acquired, not by formal apprenticeship, but by migration or by some system of 'following up'. The years 1875 to 1914 saw, then, an expansion of work which, if not formally apprenticed, nonetheless definitely continued to demand the acquisition of skill.⁵⁴

Except for the relatively few workers confronted directly by irresistible technological change, wage differentials remained sharp and status differences pronounced. Skilled and unskilled workers were rewarded very differently. Even within the same trade or occupation wage differentials of 25 to 50 percent were not uncommon. Although there was some narrowing of the gap over the period, it has been estimated that in 1913 semi-skilled workers in coal, cotton, building and engineering were still earning 12 to 29 percent less - and unskilled workers 34 to 49 percent less - than their colleagues who could boast a skill.⁵⁵ Older, skilled workers remained reluctant to accept the younger or less skilled as equals. Coal hewers looked down upon other miners, train drivers upon their firemen.

At the turn of the century in Kentish Town there existed separate 'drivers' and 'firemen's' bars in the local public houses, and when men lodged away in company hostels, drivers and firemen had separate dining tables. On these 'lodging turns' it was not unusual for drivers to order their firemen to bed, or to advise them when they had had enough to drink.⁵⁶

It was the skilled workers who were able best to retain a degree of control over their work. Indeed one of the great benefits of recent research has been to draw attention to their tenacious struggles, to their attempts at informal organisation, sabotage and various forms of restrictive practice. In industries as varied as mining and textiles, building and engineering, skilled men proved surprisingly successful - though not of course without constant struggle - at resisting the encroachments of the employers.⁵⁷ Coalmining and engineering were two very different industries. Yet in both skilled men sought, and managed, to retain a certain amount of job control. In the old established Northumberland

and Durham coalfield hewers and other workers fought to preserve cavilling: the

system of job control which operated for hundreds of years...and took the form of a kind of lottery to allocate working places. The system was evolved of drawing places out of a hat along with names of men to work them. This lottery gave everyone the same chance of good and bad places, and prevented union men and agitators being victimized with bad and dangerous work places and 'crawlers' or 'gaffers' men' from getting the good places as a reward for their collaboration.⁵⁸

Despite the fact that engineering is one of the occupations selected most often to illustrate the disastrous consequences of mechanisation, craftsmen in the industry are also 'justly famed' for their resistance to the imposition of new job controls. Well known is the apocryphal story told to James Hinton:

There used to be a craftsman in this shop who always came to work with a piece of chalk in his pocket. When he arrived each morning he would at once draw a chalk circle on the floor around his machine. If the foreman wanted to speak to him he could do so as he wished, as long as he stayed outside the circle. But if he put one foot across that line, he was a dead man.⁶⁰

A London engineer recalls the disruptive impact of new machinery in the workshop in which he was employed in 1897; but he goes on to explain that,

Passive resistance and sabotage were practised ...We persuaded the man in the tool room to allow us in "just to touch this tool up, Jim," and ended by walking in and out at will. Time limits, fixed by theoretic charts, were invariably all wrong. When excessive - as they sometimes were - we ca'cannied so as not to earn too much; if insufficient, we "went slow" just the same, and lodged a complaint to the foreman, who sent for the rate fixer. When he arrived there ensued a wordy war between the three, then the rate-fixer timed the job with a stop-watch; but it was easy to "swing the lead" on an inexperienced clerk by providing

that the tool would not cut properly. We seldom got the increase we demanded - we didn't expect to - but we usually got enough to suit our purpose.⁶¹

It is only too easy then to exaggerate the narrowing of the gap between different parts of the country, between men and women, between the skilled and the unskilled. Even in industries such as textiles, metals and engineering which were affected most intensely by mechanisation and other managerial innovation, the workforce remained most strikingly divided.

It is tempting to turn to industrial relations in search of signs of the supposed increasing homogeneity of working experience. Yet here again the evidence is less compelling than it appears at first sight. For while it is true that trade union membership grew rapidly between 1875 and 1914, the vast majority of the working population - over 75 percent - were never unionised. Even in the heavy, capital intensive sectors of the economy where trade unionism was strongest, membership remained patchy. Coalmining is a case in point: to judge from the proliferation of published and unpublished trade union histories, it would be easy to imagine that the history of the miners is synonymous with the history of their unions. But nothing could be further from the truth. It was not until the 1890s that half the coalmining labour force became unionised and not until the very end of the century that the mining unions even began to accept into membership that fifth of the labour force which worked on the surface. By 1910 the only occupational groups able to boast union membership equal to even a third of their workforces were shipbuilding, mining and quarrying, cotton, printing and national government.⁶²

It was not just that trade union membership generally remained very much a minority activity. Women and other unskilled workers remained largely non-unionised. Despite the efforts of such pioneers as Lady Dilke, Mary Macarthur and Margaret Bondfield, women were always difficult to organise. Female trade unionism remained impeded not only by low wages, domestic burdens, the hostility of the employers and popular prejudices against working women, but also by the attitudes of union members themselves. Women often found themselves refused membership, given an inferior membership grading or discriminated against in other ways. Although two

thirds of female unionists were members of textile trade unions, here too they continued to be treated as second class citizens. Thus although more than 80 percent of the membership of the Cardroom Workers' Association were women, they were largely excluded from positions as lay officers or as permanent officials. Even when the Kidderminster Power Loom, Carpet Weavers' and Textile Workers' Association finally brought itself to accept women members during the First World War, it ruled that the vote of 25 female members should be equivalent of one man's. The result of all this was, not surprisingly, that in 1914 there were still no more than 358,000 women in trade unions out of a recorded female labour force of over three and a quarter million. Search as one will, there is little sign here of the workforce becoming more homogeneous, little indication of the trade unions helping to heal the workplace divisions between men and women.⁶³

Nor can significant signs of an increasingly homogenous workforce be discerned in union attempts to represent the great mass of the workers. The persistence of small work units; the resilience of self-employment, begging and petty crime; low and uncertain wages; employer hostility: all these militated against trade union organisation. So too did ignorance: when Robert Roberts looked back at his Salford childhood in the early years of this century, he concluded that:

general apathy stemmed not from despair at the unions in chains nor the failure of such political action as there was; it sprang from mass ignorance: the millions did not know and did not want to know. At that time one had to work hard indeed to convince the unskilled labourer of the need for trade unions at all. An individualist, he was simply not interested in easing the common lot, but concerned entirely with improving his own, and that not too vigorously. From what little he understood, the aims of trade unionism seemed quite impracticable and those of socialism utterly unreal.⁶⁴

As late as 1910 trade unionists accounted for fewer than a fifth of workers even in organised industries such as metals, engineering and shipbuilding, building, transport, clothing, woodworking and printing and paper. At the end of the period three quarters of the working population remained un-unionised.

'The attempt of the "new unions" to bring trade unionism to all sections of the working class had largely failed'.⁶⁵

It is also easy to exaggerate the development of industry-wide systems of collective bargaining and the growth of industry-wide strikes and lock-outs. Despite the establishment of well publicised conciliation and arbitration boards and the fact that by 1910 'almost every...well-organized industry, except the railways, had evolved its own system of collective bargaining,' it cannot be concealed that 80 percent of workers were still not covered by such bargaining procedures.⁶⁶

pointed out, an unrealistic amount of attention has been directed towards the industry-wide form of industrial bargaining: but he is able to show that in the North Staffordshire pottery industry, for example, many of the so called general agreements covering the whole industry which were reached in 1900 and 1911, were not really worthy of the name. As Phelps-Brown long ago pointed out, relations between employer and employed at the place of work remained remarkably unregulated...four out of five employees made their own bargains'.⁶⁷ It is easy, too, to fall into the trap of paying too little attention to small, sectional disputes and too much to industry-wide, set-piece struggles. Not even in the leading sectors of the economy such as coal and cotton, did the growing organisation of employers and employed lead simply and inexorably towards industry-wide confrontation. Indeed this growing organisation also led industrial relations in the opposite direction: towards local initiative, local action and local, often unofficial, disputes. Joseph White's judgement on labour relations in the pre-First World War Lancashire cotton industry has a wider validity.

Although it was the two trade-wide lock-outs that rivetted the attention of the nation and most subsequent historians, they were not totally representative of the 1910-14 unrest. In scale and content they marked a continuation of the workers' propensity to weave a small, dense pattern of strikes fought over local and immediate issues.⁶⁸

Thus the conduct of industrial relations is no more suggestive of a growing homeogeneity of work experience than the limited progress made by the unions towards organising the vast majority of workers.

The British experience of work remained, as it always had been, striking for its heterogeneity.

IV

Recent research has done an enormous amount to deepen our understanding of late nineteenth and early twentieth century work, not least in directing our attention towards the struggles between employers and employed for control of the labour process. It is no longer possible to view work from the directors' board room or the union head office, unaware apparently of the changes which were taking place at the point of production; no longer possible to overlook the importance of these changes in the lives of ordinary working men and women. Nonetheless, the new approach is not without its dangers. So far it has done little to redress one profound imbalance which exists in the historiography of work: the disproportionate amount of attention which has been directed towards skilled workers in the expanding, capital intensive sectors of the economy. This can still lead to unsound extrapolation from the known, but probably untypical, work experience of the few to the unknown, but probably more diverse and certainly more typical experiences of the many.⁶⁹ Thus it is still possible to be misled into overlooking one major theme which is present in the best of the new historiography: the persistence, in even the leading sectors of the economy, of major continuities in workplace organisation, experiences and attitudes.⁷⁰ The conclusion, unspectacular and cautious though it is, must surely be that the years from 1875 to 1914 were a period neither of unthreatened stability nor of revolutionary change. It was rather a transitional period in the history of work, one in which acquiescence was probably as common as struggle and continuity almost certainly more common than change.

NOTES

1. Eric Richards, 'Women in the British Economy since about 1700: An Interpretation', *History*, 59(197), Oct. 1974, p.338. It is extremely difficult to draw precise distinctions between work, occupation and income: see, for example, S.R.Parker

and M.A. Smith, 'Work and Leisure', in R. Dubin (ed.), *Handbook of Work, Organization, and Society* (Chicago, 1976), pp.41-2; Peter Worsley, *et. al.*, *Introducing Sociology* (Harmondsworth, 1980), pp.274-7.

2. Editorial Collective in *History Workshop*, 3, 1977, p.2.

3. Charles More, *Skill and the English Working Class, 1870-1914* (London, 1980), preface; John Benson, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History* (Dublin, 1980), pp.1-5; M.J.Daunton 'Down the Pit: Work in the Great Northern and South Wales Coalfields, 1870-1914', *Economic History Review*, xxxiv(4), 1981, pp.578-80.

4. Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The culture of the factory in later Victorian England* (London, 1982); Richard Price, *Masters, unions and men: Work control in building and the rise of labour 1830-1914* (Cambridge, 1980); Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1974).

5. Joyce, *Work*, pp.62-3; E.J. Hobsbawm, 'Custom, Wages and Work-Load in Nineteenth-Century Industry', in Asa Briggs and John Saville (eds.), *Essays in Labour History* (London, 1967), p.345; Standish Meacham, *A Life Apart: The English Working Class 1890-1914* (London, 1977), p.38; Van Gore, 'Rank-and-File Dissent', in Chris Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations 1875-1914* (Brighton, 1982), p.64; Sylvia Grossman, 'The Radicalization of London Building Workers 1890-1914' (Unpublished Univ. of Toronto Ph. D. Thesis, 1977), pp.319, 323, 333.

6. James A. Schmiechen, 'State Reform and the Local Economy: An Aspect of Industrialization in late Victorian and Edwardian London', *Economic History Review*, xxviii(3), 1975, p.413. See also Grossman, 'Building', p.xv.

7. Phyllis Deane and W.A. Cole, *British Economic Growth 1688-1959: Trends and Structure* (Cambridge, 1969), pp.141-2; Gregory Anderson, 'Some Aspects of the Labour Market in Britain c.1870-1914', in Wrigley (ed.), *Industrial Relations*, pp.9-10; M.W. Kirby, *The British Coalmining Industry 1870-1946: A Political and Economic History* (London, 1977), p.6.

8. Geoffrey Crossick, 'The Emergence of the Lower Middle Class in Britain: A Discussion', in Geoffrey Crossick (ed.), *The Lower Middle Class in Britain 1870-1914* (London, 1977), p.15; Duncan

Bythell, *The Sweated Trades: Outwork in Nineteenth-century Britain* (London, 1978), pp.14-15, 19, 143, 147-8, 151; Joyce, *Work*, pp.74, 136, 159, 340; P.L. Payne, 'The Emergence of the Large-scale Company in Great Britain, 1870-1914', *Economic History Review*, xx(3), 1967, pp.519, 527, 534.

9. E.H. Hunt, *British Labour History 1815-1914* (London, 1981), pp.8-10, 15-18, 21-3; Meacham, *Life Apart*, p.103; Bythell, *Sweated Trades*, p.148; Craig Littler, 'Deskilling and changing structures of control', in Stephen Wood (ed.), *The Degradation of Work?: Skill, deskilling and the labour process* (London, 1982), p.137; B.L. Hutchins, *Women in Modern Industry* (London, 1915), pp.84-8; Barbara Drake, *Women in the Engineering Trades: A Problem, a Solution, and some Criticisms...* (London, 1917), p.8.

10. Eric Hopkins, *A Social History of the English Working class 1815-1945* (London, 1979), pp. 104-5; A.E. Musson, 'Industrial Motive Power in the United Kingdom, 1800-70', *Economic History Review*, xxix(3), 1976, p.435.

11. E.H. Hunt, *Regional Wage Variations in Britain 1850-1914* (Oxford, 1973), p.358; Hunt, *Labour History*, p.102.

12. The classic statement is of course Braverman, *Labor*. See also Cunningham, *infra*; R.J. Morris, 'Whatever happened to the British working class, 1750-1850?', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 41, 1980, pp.14-15; Grossman, 'Building'; Richard Price, 'The Labour Process and Labour History', *Social History Society Newsletter*, 6(1), Spring 1981; Joseph Melling, 'British Employers and the Human Factor in Industry: the ideology of welfare management in Britain, c. 1880-1930', *Social History Society Newsletter*, 6(1), Spring 1981; Stephen A. Marglin, 'What do bosses do? The origins and functions of hierarchy in capitalist production', in A. Gorz (ed.), *The Division of Labour* (Hassocks, 1976).

13. Littler, 'Deskilling', pp.133-5, 137; W.R. Garside and H.F. Gospel, 'Employers and Managers: Their Organizational Structure and Changing Industrial Strategies', in Wrigley (ed.), *Industrial Relations*, pp.100-103.

14. W.R. Watson, *Machines and Men: An Autobiography of an Itinerant Mechanic* (London, 1935), pp.94-7; Richard Price, 'Rethinking Labour History: The Importance of Work', in James E. Cronin and Jonathen Schneer (eds.), *Social Conflict and the Political Order in Modern Britain* (London, 1982), p.201; Joyce, *Work*, p.100; Grossman, 'Building',

pp.38, 317-8; Roger Penn, 'Skilled manual workers in the labour process, 1856-1964', in Wood (ed.), *Degradation*, pp.93-5.

15. Meacham, *Life Apart*, p.110. See also Watson, *Machines*, pp.90-91.

16. Grossman, 'Building', p.xv. Also Mark G. Hirsch, 'The Federation of Sailmakers of Great Britain and Ireland, 1889-1922; A Craft Union in Crisis' (Unpublished Univ. of Warwick M.A. Thesis, 1976), p.69; Meacham, *Life Apart*, pp.25, 134-5, 140, 143; H.F. Moorhouse, 'The Marxist theory of the labour aristocracy', *Social History*, 3(1), 1978, p.68.

17. Benson, *Coalminers*; Joyce, *Work*, p.52; Grossman, 'Building', pp.xiii, xvii, 15, 86-93, 105-6, 315-19, 333; Jonathan Zeitlin, 'Craft Control and the division of labour: engineers and compositors in Britain 1890-1930', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 3, 1979. For textiles, see Joyce, *Work*, pp.xiv, xviii, 3, 50, 67, 73-4, 77, 166-7, 226; Joseph L. White, 'Lancashire Cotton Textiles', in Wrigley (ed.), *Industrial Relations*, pp.211, 213. For metals and engineering, see Penn, 'Skilled manual workers', pp.92-3; Hirsch, 'Sailmakers', p.70; Watson, *Machines*, pp.12-13, 214; James Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards' Movement* (London, 1973), pp.58-9; Drake, *Women*, pp.8-9; Garside and Gospel, 'Employers', p.109; Price, 'Rethinking', p.192.

18. Jeffrey G. Williamson, 'Earnings Inequality in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Journal of Economic History*, xl(3), 1980, p.465. Also R. Halstead, 'The Stress of Competition from the Workman's Point of View', *The Economic Review*, 4, Jan. 1894, pp.54-6; Meacham, *Life Apart*, pp. 141-2, 179; Grossman, 'Building', pp.xvi-xvii; Watson, *Machines*, p.32; Charles More, 'Skill and the survival of apprenticeship', in Wood (ed.), *Degradation*, p.110; More, *Skill*.

19. Hunt, *Labour History*, p.302. Also pp.296, 301, 305; Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism* (Harmondworth, 1963), p.95; Benson, *Coalminers*, pp.196-7; Drake, *Women*, p.10; K.D. Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (London, 1974), pp. 4-5; James Hinton, *Labour and Socialism: A History of the British Labour Movement 1867-1974* (Brighton, 1983), p.24.

20. John Benson, 'Coalmining', in Wrigley (ed.), *Industrial Relations*, pp.200-204; Pelling, *Trade Unionism*, pp.112-13; Penn, 'Skilled manual workers', p.93; Grossman, 'Building', pp.314-7, 320; Joyce,

Work, p.64.

21. Hopkins, *Social History*, p.106. Also Hobsbawm, 'Custom', p.114; Meacham, *Life Apart*, pp. 129-31; Patrick Joyce, 'The Culture of the Craft and the Culture of the Factory in 19th Century England', *Social History Society Newsletter*, 6(1), 1981.

22. Joyce, *Work*, p.97.

23. Price, 'Rethinking', p.197. Also Price, 'Labour Process', p.2; Grossman, 'Building', p.333.

24. Raphael Samuel, 'The Workshop of the World: Steam Power and Hand Technology in mid-Victorian Britain', *History Workshop*, 3, 1977; Editorial Collective, 'Work'; Deane and Cole, *Economic Growth*, p.142.

25. Payne, 'Large-scale Company', p.520; John Benson, *The Penny Capitalists: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working-Class Entrepreneurs* (Dublin, 1983), pp.41-9; Deane and Cole, *Economic Growth*, p.143; Littler, 'Deskilling', p.132.

26. J.J. Tobias, *Crime and Industrial Society in the 19th Century* (London, 1967), pp.73-7. Several of the contributors to this volume, and a number of those to whom I read an earlier version of this chapter, disagree with my view that begging was a form of work.

27. David Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1982), pp.199-200; Tobias, *Crime*, pp.76-7; Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (Manchester, 1971), p.150; W.H. Davies, *The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp* (London, 1924), pp.203, 206, 213, 249-50.

28. Colin Bundy and Dermot Healy, 'Aspects of Urban Poverty', *Oral History*, 6(1), 1978, p.79.

29. Raphael Samuel, *East End Underworld: Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding* (London, 1981), pp.23-4, 29-30.

30. Jones, *Crime*, ch.1, pp.126, 135.

31. Stephen Humphries, 'Steal to Survive: The Social Crime of Working Class Children 1890-1940', *Oral History*, 9(1), 1981, p.27. Also p.29; Benson, *Penny Capitalists*, pp.9-10.

32. Humphries, 'Steal', p.28.

33. Jones, *Crime*, pp.66-7, 69, 75-6; Humphries, 'Steal', pp.28-9

34. University of Kent, Oral History Collection, Michael Winstanley, 'Life in Kent before 1914', G2, H. Gambrill, pp.161-2. Also B8, P.H. Barnes, p.36; B10, J.H. Barwick, p.46.

35. Jones, *Crime*, pp.62, 67, 84.

36. Humphries, 'Steal', p.30. Also Bundy and

Healy, 'Urban Poverty', pp.86, 92; Benson, *Penny Capitalists*, pp.96, 99-100; Raphael Samuel, 'Industrial Crime in the 19th Century', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 25, 1972.

37. The following section is based upon by book, *Penny Capitalists*.

38. Watson, *Machines*, p.22.

39. Richards, 'Women', p.352; Meacham, *Life Apart*, p.95.

40. Elizabeth Roberts, 'Working-Class Standards of Living in Barrow and Lancaster, 1890-1914', *Economic History Review*, xxx(2), 1977, p.311. See also E. Bridge, 'Women's Employment: Problems of Research', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 26, 1973; Select Committee of the House of Lords on Sweating System, PP 1889, 3rd Report, Q.19,701, R. Juggins.

41. Meacham, *Life Apart*, pp.100, 175-6; Hunt, *Labour History*, p.9; Bythell, *Sweated Trades*, pp. 144, 159, 166, 172; Schmiechen, 'State Reform'; D.H. Morgan, *Harvesters and Harvesting 1840-1900: A Study of the Rural Proletariat* (London, 1982), pp. 58-73.

42. University of Bristol, Wills Memorial Library, Forest of Dean Miners' Association, E.A. Rymer, *To the President and Members of the Trades Union Congress Aberdeen*, Sept. 5, 1884.

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44. Joyce, *Work*, pp.69-70; Hopkins, *Social History*, pp.104-5; Lowell J. Satre, 'After the Match Girls' Strike: Bryant and May in the 1890s', *Victorian Studies*, 26(1), 1982. The smallest employers were often excluded from the legislation.

45. C.H. Lee, *Regional economic growth in the United Kingdom since the 1880s* (Maidenhead, 1971), pp.19-20; C.H. Lee, 'Regional Growth and Structural Change in Victorian Britain', *Economic History Review*, xxiv(3), 1981, pp.451-2.

46. Lee, 'Regional Growth', pp.439, 451. Also Hunt, *Regional*, pp.1, 61-6; Joyce, *Work*, pp.77, 100, 166-7, 225; Benson, *Miners*, p.78.

47. Littler, 'Deskilling', pp.124-5, 128, 133, 138; Garside and Gospel, 'Employers', p.102; Grossman, 'Building', p.39; Benson, *Miners*, p.72; Richard Whipp, 'Some Aspects of Work, Home and Trade Unionism in the British Pottery Industry 1900-1920' (Paper read at Anglo-Dutch Labour History Conference, Maastricht, 1982), p.4.
48. Penn, 'Manual workers', pp.94-5; Price, 'Rethinking', p.201; Grossman, 'Building', pp.38,80.
49. More, *Skill*, p.27; Joyce, *Work*, p.54.
50. Joyce, *Work*, pp.312-3, 341; Grossman, 'Building', pp.88, 331; Whipp, 'Pottery', p.2.
51. Hunt, *Labour History*, pp.98, 101, 106; More, *Skill*, pp.229-30.
52. Whipp, 'Pottery', p.7. Also Joyce, *Work*, pp.112-3.
53. More, *Skill*, p.184.
54. More, *Skill*, pp.64, 164, 181, 228, 231; Meacham, *Life Apart*, pp.179-80; Eric Hopkins, 'Were the Webbs wrong about apprenticeship in the Black Country?' *West Midland Studies*, 6, 1973.
55. J.W.F. Rowe, *Wages in Practice and Theory* (London, 1928), p.49; Grossman, 'Building', pp.5, 315; Williamson, 'Inequality'.
56. Frank McKenna, 'Victorian Railway Workers', *History Workshop*, 1, 1976, p.42. Also Benson, 'Coalmining', p.193.
57. Price, 'Rethinking', pp.185-8, 192-8; Price, 'Labour Process'. For building, see Grossman, 'Building', p.42; Price, *Masters*. For textiles, see Joyce, *Work*, p.96; White, 'Cotton Textiles', pp.214-6; William Lazonick, 'Industrial relations and technical change: the case of the self-acting mule', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 3, 1979, pp.231-62.
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59. Hinton, *Shop Stewards*, pp.56-100; Price, 'Rethinking', p.193.
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63. Richards, 'Women', p.353; Whipp, 'Pottery', p.22; Norbert C. Soldon, *Women in British Trade Unions 1874-1976* (Dublin, 1978), p.63; Sheila

Lewenhak, *Women and Trade Unions: An Outline History of Women in the British Trade Union Movement* (London, 1977), pp.92-3; Angela John, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Women Workers at Victorian Coal Mines* (London, 1980), p.163, n.80; Sheila Lewenhak, 'Women at Work: Sub-contracting, Craft Unionism and Women in England, with Special Reference to the West Midlands, 1750-1914', in Anthony Wright and Richard Shackleton (eds.), *Worlds of Labour: Essays in Birmingham Labour History* (Birmingham, 1983), pp.11-13.

64. Roberts, *Classic Slum*, p.90.

65. Clegg, Fox and Thompson, *Trade Unions*, p.487. Also pp.456, 468.

66. Clegg, Fox and Thompson, *Trade Unions*, p.47. Also Joyce, *Work*, pp.63-4, 68.

67. Whipp, 'Pottery', pp.18-19.

68. White, 'Cotton', p.225. Also 225-7; Benson, 'Coalmining', pp.203-5.

69. For a similar argument applied to an earlier period, see Eric Hopkins, 'Working Hours and Conditions during the Industrial Revolution: A Re-Appraisal', *Economic History Review*, xxxv(1), 1982.

70. For example, Samuel, 'Workshop'; Joyce, *Work*, p.225; D. Bythell, 'The Handloom Weavers: A Study in the English Cotton Industry during the Industrial Revolution' (Cambridge, 1969).

Chapter Four

STRIKES

M.J. Haynes

I

On July 14th 1900, 36 men in a Willenhall iron foundry walked out. Casting iron was an unpleasant job at the best of times but the price of graphite had risen and their employer reintroduced clay crucibles worsening, as they saw it, their conditions. For the men this had been the last straw. As they came blinking out into the daylight no doubt their feelings were mixed. Could we listen to their conversations as they walked out of the yard we would hear bitterness, anger and resentment that they had been forced to strike but we would also catch a certain elation that the habits and routines of years past had suddenly been thrown off. Perhaps this elation would affect us too though through it we might also catch a tinge of fear that when it was over some of them, perhaps all of them, would not walk through these gates again. On the 26th of August it was all over and the men had lost. Work, our report says tersely, 'resumed by most workpeople on employer's terms.' And so our strike passes into obscurity. We only know of it because the statisticians at the Board of Trade listed its bare details.¹ A year later we would not even have these, for the task of trying to cover all strikes overwhelmed the civil servants and they abandoned it. Then it would only have been what it has since become for historians - a statistic; one amongst the 648 strikes recorded in 1900, one amongst the 19,000 strikes recorded by the Board of Trade in the years 1888 - 1914. Even in 1900 the 36 men made up only an infinitesimal proportion of the total number of strikers and strike days. In the terms set by the late E.H. Carr our Willenhall iron casters' strike is not an 'historical fact'.

And yet it is just in its very banality that it lays claim to our attention because for the iron casters themselves it was a fact, just as was every one of the strike days recorded by the state and the many more that did not creep into the statistics. Moreover, if the evidence of oral history is any guide, it was a 'fact' that would still figure in their memories in later years. For those few weeks they had not only challenged their employer, they had challenged themselves and even if, at the end of the day, the experience chastened them and reinforced old attitudes, historians still have the task of disentangling the meaning of this and thousands of similar actions in the context of working class life in our period.

Yet for some historians such actions are not a problem. Strikes, writes one, were 'blind protests' which might be garnished by socialists 'with the jargon of class warfare' but which in reality were little more than responses to changing economic conditions.² There is a condescension in the words themselves that mark out these views as those of a conservative historian. But from the left too, albeit by a different route, we find the same conclusion. Thus strikes were largely 'sectional' and 'economistic', detached from the 'wider arena of working class experience' which created a class culture 'to a significant degree autonomous of ... immediate workplace connections.'³

It is in no small part due to these attitudes that we actually know so little about strikes. Strike statistics are endlessly quoted, often with insufficient appreciation of their limitations; some of the biggest strikes are well discussed and occasionally a smaller strike in a particular factory such as that at the Manningham Mills in Bradford in 1890 enters into the wider stream of history - in this case because it led, in part, to the founding of the Independent Labour Party. But generally we still know relatively little and when it comes to the strikers themselves the gaps are even greater. Writing thirty years ago in a now classic study, K.G.J.C. Knowles spoke of 'rank-and-file attitudes and opinions as surely one of the most important aspects of strikes and the one about which least is known.' Today little has changed even for such an important wave of militancy as that before the First World War. Here a recent historian, Bob Holton, notes that the analysis of consciousness and behaviour is still 'extremely thin ... superficial', with the actions and motives of the

participants 'rather obscure.'⁴

But, as both Knowles and Holton in their different ways have been concerned to show, it is not so easy to marginalise strikes. The work relationship does not dominate every pore of our existence but it is the central fact of life: 'non-work clearly compensates for work alienation, at least to some extent, yet does not remove the experience of the latter.'⁵ Indeed we can go further; without work as the point of reference the concept of class itself becomes meaningless except as an arbitrary descriptive classification. Of course the work situation is ambiguous, the very fact of work requires the worker to submit to an unequal situation. But to the extent that workers try collectively to control that relationship it also breeds and directs resistance. It is just because of this basic type of ambiguity that the consciousness of class is so volatile - continually changing and oscillating, being built up only to be broken down again through time. Strikes are a crucial part of this process for even when they take the most sectional of forms they still involve a significant heightening of the basic ambiguities of class. In these terms an examination of strikes is not only an important part of understanding the experience of many members of the working class but it also opens up the contradictions in the wider issue of working class 'subordination' in late Victorian and Edwardian England.

II

Strikes have a history almost as long as paid work itself but it has only been with the development of capitalism and more particularly industrial capitalism that they have become, in James Cronin's words, 'the dominant mode of social protest.' For this to occur a number of conditions are necessary; obviously there must be a working class organised in industries where a strike potential exists; equally the political and legal framework must not directly repress strikes though it may continue to hamper them. Both these conditions were present in Britain from the mid 1820s but strikes did not immediately become the distinctive form of working class protest. For this a less obvious condition was necessary - workers had to learn what have been called, perhaps misleadingly, 'the rules of the game' in the sense of accepting the inevitability of the development of industrial capitalism and seeking to change

it by working within it and attempting to move beyond it. On this basis Cronin argues that it was only in the 1870s that 'the strike truly came into its own as a form of collective organisation....' Other forms of protest such as the food riot lingered on but now as a subordinate rather than a major vehicle of protest.⁶

Cronin's view that we can date the dominance of the strike weapon from the beginning of our period has broad support from those like Peter Stearns who see in the changing dimensions of strikes an index of the 'modernisation' of the working class and its attitudes.⁷ There is a danger, however, that what we see in the 1870s is not the strike itself 'coming into its own' but the perception of it and we know from our own experience that the 'popular' perception of industrial conflict is often at one remove from its reality. Individual strikes had achieved prominence and notoriety before but it seems that it was only in the late 1860s and early 1870s that with the 'Sheffield Outrages' and the subsequent Royal Commission and legislation that 'strikes' as a whole became the focus of attention. By the 1880s individuals were making the first attempts to chart the changing level of strike activity and taking their analysis back to around 1870. Their pressure on the government to take over this task was rewarded in 1888 when the Board of Trade was given responsibility for the collection of strike data.⁸

Two related elements were involved here. Firstly, there was the development of a definition, or we should say competing definitions, of a 'strike problem' related to the development of a modern industrial society. George Bevan, who made the first attempt to count the strikes of the 1870s, spoke of them as being 'a very grave disease in the body social' and claimed, though his own evidence hardly supported it, that in the 1870s they were an 'epidemic ... which has unfortunately become chronic, and seems, if anything to grow in intensity', only to have them a few pages later as a 'terrible cancer in the midst of our industrial body.' This overblown but commonplace definition of 'a strike problem' was not shared by everyone - one of his critics argued that far from his evidence showing the 'industrial body' at death's door, strikes were 'more of a "measly", than of a "cancerous" description.'⁹ The second element was a related belief that strikes arose in large part out of inadequate information on both sides and that to define 'the problem' was therefore to go some way to solving it.

Both these elements were brought together by John Burnett, the first Labour Correspondent of the Board of Trade, in introducing the first *Annual Report of Strikes and Lockouts for 1888*,

In Great Britain, especially, as the foremost producing nation of the world, labour quarrels have been more frequent, on a larger scale, and more pertinaciously fought out, than elsewhere ... In no way, perhaps, can more be done to effect reform ... than by the collection and publication from time to time of correct information ...

On this basis he hoped that strikes would less and less become 'the only arbiters in the struggle of employer and employed.'¹⁰

Because of this it is only in the 1870s that strikes began to emerge from their statistical dark age. But as more light is thrown on the period before 1870 we may well find that they had become the 'dominant mode of social conflict' long before. This is certainly suggested by Richard Price's pioneering attempt to tabulate masons' strikes on the basis of union records for the period 1836-1896. In these terms what may be important about the 1870s is both a new perception about strikes and an attempt to create the embryo of an industrial relations system to regulate them.¹¹

Nevertheless, if this hypothesis is correct it only serves to reinforce the need to study strikes as the distinctive form of working class protest throughout the period 1875-1914. But it also shows the danger in the way in which our view of strikes is affected by the contemporary perception of them - especially when that perception is hidden in apparently cold statistics. Since we will lean heavily on statistics here and especially those collected by the Board of Trade after 1888, it behoves us to be clear at the outset about their limitations.

'Strike statistics', writes a recent commentator, 'are incomplete and therefore a "sample" of the entire "population" of strikes that actually occur'.¹² This incompleteness arises from three sources. In the first place the criteria for inclusion are deliberately restrictive. In the period 1888-96 an unsuccessful attempt was made to count all known strikes but this involved the Board of Trade in what seemed to be a disproportionate amount of time and effort chasing information on the smallest strikes. In 1897 therefore the fundamental

restriction was introduced which remains today. To be counted, a strike must involve at least ten workers and last at least a day unless, in either case, more than one hundred working days were lost. The Board of Trade then recalculated its main series back to 1893 on this basis. A consistent but restrictive set of aggregate statistics therefore exists from 1893 and all the lesser series are consistent from 1897.

Incompleteness arises secondly because the coverage of the statistics is limited. There is no obligation to report strikes and therefore only those can be counted that come to the state's attention. In the period before 1914 the main method of collection of information depended upon a network of labour correspondents throughout the country reporting strikes and the Board of Trade then requesting information from employers and trade unions. Although the Board of Trade frequently expressed its confidence in this method there is no doubt that it was less than adequate, though whether it was any worse than modern methods is not clear.

But incompleteness also arises for a third and more complex reason. The process of defining a strike as a strike is itself a social one. Strikes are part of a whole series of sanctions that workers can impose on their employers. The evidence suggests that workers have a relatively clear idea when a strike becomes a strike. However it is employers who have the real power of definition by choosing whether or not to withhold pay or take more extreme measures. This definition by employers has been termed 'strategic' in the sense that they must decide whether to overcome the issue by negotiation or confrontation. Obviously employers' strategy and consequent strike definition will vary from workplace to workplace but it may also vary between workgroups within the same workplace. Generally the consequence is that employers will think that they experience more strikes than workers themselves will recognise.¹³ But the social process of strike definition can also operate the other way and lead employers to deny the existence of a strike. This was perhaps more common before 1914 than today when the widespread use of subcontracting might lead employers to substitute one group of workers for another. The substituted workers might well feel that they had effectively been locked out but, wrote Llewellyn Smith, the Labour Commissioner at the Board of Trade; in these circumstances 'it is not uncommon for an employer to deny the existence of a

trade dispute, although the men formerly in his employ may be actually drawing "strike pay" from their unions and "picketing" his works to prevent their places being filled.¹⁴ This process of social definition of the strike is not therefore just semantic. Today it is known to produce enormous differences in employer, union and state estimates of the number of strikes and this was no less true before 1914. In 1895, for example, it was claimed by the Oldham Master Spinners Association that 158 disputes had taken place in their district alone whereas the Board of Trade recorded just fifteen disputes in the entire spinning section of the cotton industry.¹⁵

III

Bearing these limitations in mind we can now proceed to look at the aggregate record of strikes on the basis of the data collected by the Board of Trade. Table 4.1 sets out the annual averages of the three basic series of strike statistics and the two averages that can be derived from them. We follow the conventional practice in presenting a separate series for coalmining since it is often argued that this industry is uniquely strike-prone and can therefore distort any national series.

The first point that arises relates to this issue of the role of coalmining in the overall profile of disputes. When Table 4.1 is examined in conjunction with Table 4.2 it is immediately apparent that the historical dominance of coalmining disputes has been a limited one. In the period 1893-1914 coalmining accounted for only one fifth of all recorded disputes. The industry was still 'strike-prone' but to a much lesser degree than later. It did, however, have over half the total number of strikers so that coalmining strikes were obviously larger than those in the rest of the economy. There were two reasons for this. In the first place the size of colliery units was much larger than those in the rest of the economy. Of 1,784 colliery businesses surveyed by Chapman and Ashton on the basis of *Rylands' Directory* for 1912, 458 (26 percent) employed less than 100 men; 552 (31 percent) employed between 100 and 499; 393 (22 percent) between 500 and 999; and 381 (21 percent) over 1,000.¹⁶ But secondly, the number of strikers was inflated by the major disputes of 1893 and 1912 and large scale regional disputes such as those in 1892 in Durham, 1894 in Scotland and 1898 and 1910

Table 4.1: Strikes in Great Britain and Northern Ireland recorded by the Official Statistics, 1893-1914 17

Annual Averages of	No. of strikes	No. of strikers 000's	Total striker days 000's	Strikers per strike	Strike days per striker
(a) Non-coalmining					
1893-95	563	138	3,405	258	25
1896-98	686	126	6,479	181	48
1899-1901	525	107	2,363	201	24
1902-04	261	49	1,005	186	21
1905-07	387	95	1,694	243	19
1908-10	263	151	4,806	548	28
1911-14	875	451	7,521	562	21
(b) Coalmining					
1893-95	180	267	11,810	1,680	33
1896-98	130	98	4,813	798	34
1899-1901	133	74	877	548	11
1902-04	125	104	1,403	756	15
1905-07	84	57	817	690	16
1908-10	181	217	2,973	1,138	14
1911-14	160	430	10,161	2,826	16

Table 4.2: Share of Coalmining in Total Disputes, 1893-1976

	% Strikes	% Strikers	% Strike Days
1893-1914	21	52	56
1915-1924	17	47	52
1925-1944 *	41	52	34
1945-1964	63	26	18
1965-1976	12	8	20

* excludes 1926

in South Wales. When we turn to strike days the high pre 1914 percentage is accounted for almost entirely by the weighting of these major strikes. In fact in other years in this period coalmining strikes appear to have been significantly shorter on average than those in the rest of the economy. The place of coalmining in the overall strike profile therefore was the reverse of what it was to be later - relatively numerous but smaller strikes. Since the mid 1960s, by contrast, as Table 4.2 shows, there has been a partial return to the pre 1914 pattern of relatively fewer strikes (proportionately and absolutely) but more major disputes.

If we turn to the rest of the economy the value of separating out the coal industry becomes apparent. By later standards the numbers of strikes were quite high. It was only with the upturn of strike activity in the 1960s that strike levels began to run consistently above the pre 1914 levels. This suggests that real levels of striking were considerably higher before 1914 than later. This is because strike frequency depends, amongst other things, on the share of the labour force in industries where strikes are likely. Clearly the structure of the pre 1914 economy was much less conducive to striking than it would be later. Similarly, strike frequency is also related to the degree of trade union organisation but before 1914 trade union density was much lower than later - approximately six percent in 1892, thirteen percent in 1900, fifteen percent in 1910 and 23 percent in 1914. But even these figures give an exaggerated impression of the real density since they are inflated by the large number of miners in unions - in 1892 they made up one seventh of all trade unionists, in 1900 a sixth and in 1910 a quarter.

The series for the number of strikers and strikers per strike are lower than after 1914 as one would expect since these reflect both the size of the work unit and the degree of interdependence of both business and worker organisations. But it is interesting, if not unpredictable, that there is a slight tendency for the size of strike to increase before 1914. It is when we turn to the series for strike days and especially strike days per striker that we see one of the sharpest differences with the later experience. Strikes were simply much longer in our period.

It is tempting to ascribe this difference to the greater bitterness of industrial relations in our period and in a sense this is obviously so.¹⁸

The problem is that a comparison of any two strikes soon reveals that concepts like 'bitterness' or 'intransigence' are too indiscriminate to be of much analytical value. For example, in 1893 in the south east Lancashire cotton strike that led to the Brooklands agreement, nearly 50,000 workers were on strike for five months. Such a long conflict could only have been sustained with considerable 'resolve', 'bitterness' and 'intransigence'. But in the same year in the Hull docks a strike of some 7,500 dockers and 2,500 workers in associated trades lasted only six weeks before the workers were forced back 'practically on the masters' own terms.'¹⁹ Yet 'resolve', 'bitterness' and 'intransigence' were no less apparent in this shorter dispute - indeed it could be argued that they were more apparent. The introduction of well paid blacklegs led to violence and arson attacks. Extra police were brought into the town from Leeds, Nottingham and Lancashire, mounted police came from London and finally mounted troops were introduced. As one perhaps still excited contemporary put it after the dispute had ended

a sort of panic seized the town, and many respectable citizens became walking arsenals. The gun-shops were cleared of their stock over and over again. Life preservers, knuckle-dusters, and batons were at a premium. The weapons of the dockers were not of such an elaborate description but consisted of such things as came ready to hand.²⁰

To understand the differences between the length and character of these disputes therefore it is necessary to have a much sharper focus. They were distinguished by such factors as previous history, the character of the workers' organisations, the size of funds, the degree of preparation, the forms of organisation of the strikes themselves, the extent of wider links both locally and nationally, the nature of the employers' strategies both generally towards unions (in Hull they aimed to destroy their power) and specifically in dealing with the dispute (the use of blacklegs was deliberately avoided by the cotton masters in their dispute). No doubt this list could be extended without much effort but it is sufficient to illustrate a point that applies to the whole experience of strikes, from their causes to process to results and aftermath - namely their complexity. Unfortunately this has too often been ignored in discussions of strikes but as Alvin

Gouldner noted many years ago now 'a "strike" is a social phenomenon of enormous complexity which, in its totality, is never susceptible to complete description, let alone complete explanation.'²¹

The statistics suggest then that strikes were a major form of conflict in our period in which workers, from engineers to music hall artists, showed themselves to be both tenacious and resilient in spite of having in many respects a weaker position than their modern counterparts. It would, of course, be interesting to supplement these domestic statistics with international ones. Unfortunately the difficulties of comparison are all but insurmountable. In the first place even where statistics exist they vary too much in their criteria. This problem invalidates, for example, the attempt of Peter Stearns to compare strike frequency in different industries internationally.²² The only possible comparisons that can be made are in terms of strike days since these are least sensitive to differences in criteria and coverage. But these will also be subject to the confusing effects of different levels of development, union organisation, government policy etc. The first of these can to some extent be overcome by using strike days per 1,000 workers as the standard measure but the interpretation of any differences is still ambiguous because of other influences which cannot so easily be held constant. However one thing is clear - the comparisons that can be made do not show that the United Kingdom had a significantly lower level of strike days than other countries.²³ To this extent, without enabling us to make precise comparisons, the statistics help to cast doubt upon the assumption implicit in much recent social history that militancy was greater elsewhere.

If we turn now to look more closely at our period itself certain broad trends stand out from Table 4.1. The best accepted indicator of fluctuations in the level of strike activity is the number of strikes. This shows that strikes tend to cluster or come in 'waves'.²⁴ The first of these that can be clearly identified came in the early 1870s before any reliable attempt was made to collect statistics. The second took place in 1888-91 coinciding with the first official attempts to collect strike data. Unfortunately because of classification differences the statistics are not comparable with latter ones so they are not given here.²⁵ Our series begins, therefore with the downturn that followed the 1888-91 strike wave. In the

1890s the number of strikes gradually declined. As the number of strikers fell so did the average size of strikes. Strike days were high because workers' resistance involved major set-piece confrontations. The average length of strikes also increased as the balance of forces swung to the employers. This downturn continued into the 1900s when some contemporaries could begin to anticipate elements of the famous Ross and Hartmann 'withering away of the strike' thesis of the 1950s.²⁶ The number of strikes continued to fall and the lack of national disputes rapidly brought down the numbers of strikers and strike days. The size and length of strikes now both fell.

Then in 1911-14 our statistics document the dramatic upturn of the pre war strike wave although the combativity of workers was prefigured in the increase in the numbers of strikers and the increase in strike days per striker in the period 1908-10. In 1911, however, the number of strikes rose dramatically and this was sustained, with variations, right through to the beginning of August 1914. Strikers and strike days rose as well. The average size of strikes also increased significantly. Strike days per striker however now tended to fall somewhat, reflecting the way in which gains were more easily won in these years.

The general contours of this type of strike wave have been analysed by Cronin. Briefly he has shown how they played a 'pivotal' role. During them, strikes broadened to involve new groups of workers, new demands were put forward, new tactics developed. Organisationally they led to a spreading of trade union organisation and a revamping of union structures.²⁷ The strike wave thus involves a breakdown of existing 'norms' and a heightened consciousness of what is possible on the part of workers and insofar as it is possible to speak of the 'forward march' or 'rise of labour' the strike wave tends to concentrate this in relatively short periods of qualitative transformation whose gains have subsequently to be defended.

IV

How then are we to explain these variations in the level of strike frequency? Recent critiques of the analysis of strike dynamics have focussed on two problems which clearly also exist in the historical discussion of strikes. The first is a tendency to see strike activity as a mechanical response to the

various structural factors which condition industrial and broader social relations, so implicitly marginalising 'the perceptions, intentions and strategies of the men and women involved'. The second problem has been that in discussing these structural factors economists, sociologists, psychologists etc. have been afflicted by a 'disciplinary parochialism' to the further detriment of a full understanding of the social complexity of strike activity.²⁸

The three most common approaches have been what we can call the economic, the social and the organisational. Economists have stressed how, once workers have learnt 'the rules of the game', strike levels will depend upon the interaction of worker expectations and economic conditions. Strikes will be more frequent in years when unemployment is low and wages are rising. The social approach, by contrast, stresses the role of social disorganisation in strike causation. This may occur at a general level through 'industrialisation' or 'modernisation' or at the level of the workplace through the introduction of new work processes, work conditions etc. Clearly both these approaches point to important dimensions of strike action but they have not proved convincing explanations in themselves whether taken singly or together. This has led to a stress on the third approach which emphasises the role of working class organisation. While economic and social forces are broad in their impact, not all those affected actually strike. This is because striking is a form of collective action and it therefore depends upon the organisational capacity and 'resources' of particular groups of workers and these are not uniformly distributed. Applying this approach to strikes in Britain in the period 1892 to 1938 Bean and Peel have claimed that 'a dominant role in strike activity appears to have been played by organisational factors and especially the activity and recruiting campaigns of trade unions ...'²⁹ However, while this approach adds a further dimension, it does not resolve the problem of strike dynamics as can be seen if we consider that the number of workers who strike is always fewer than those organised into trade unions. Even if we allow for an admittedly unequal distribution of resources amongst organised workers, the problem is still not solved; rather we have the makings of a dangerously tautological argument where we know that organisational factors produce strikes because strikes only occur where sufficient organisational and resource

elements are present. Why is it then that these approaches have proved insufficient?

The obvious reason is the problem of 'parochialism'. The three approaches are all partial but this though true is too simple. Even if we try to mould them together we still encounter two major difficulties: firstly, they can each be criticised for the weakness of their theoretical foundations; and secondly, they ignore a crucial dimension present in all strikes which at certain decisive points acts to transform the nature of strike activity itself. We will deal relatively briefly with the first difficulty before looking at the second in more detail.

The problem with both the social and organisational approaches is that both are underdeveloped. Edwards has recently examined at some length the difficulties with the former and the reader must be referred to his valuable discussion but his central point, that the social approach is 'inchoate', can be extended to the organisational approach too.³⁰ For example, is the decisive factor trade union organisation and if so where does this leave the argument that unions moderate strike levels? Perhaps the key is to be found more in informal work group solidarity so that formal organisational measures are significant only when they are underpinned by this? As yet we simply do not know. The same criticism cannot be levelled at the economic approach - here we encounter an overblown theory vitiated by the questionable nature of some of its underlying assumptions. This is most notoriously the case with that tradition which implies that strikes are irrational given that market forces set determinate wage levels or so reduce the area of indeterminacy as to make one wonder what all the fuss is about.³¹ Strikes then appear only as a result of inadequate information on both sides or more wildly still as bouts of collective irrationality when the emotions run free.

Obviously there are complex issues here and we can do no more than alert historians to the hidden dangers. The fact that they have tended to use elements of these approaches in a less than rigorous fashion does not remove this problem.³² For example, many historians have stressed the way in which unemployment affected strike activity in our period. But granted that it was an important factor we still need to know how it operated. Did low unemployment reduce the costs of moving elsewhere for workers and therefore make them more militant - but why not move

in the first place? Did it, as Pelling has suggested, reduce the supply of potential blacklegs - but then how serious a factor was this?³³ Did it increase the costs of strikes to employers? But then was unemployment ever that low in the period and did not buoyant demand make it easier, at least to some extent, to hold out against a strike? These questions are not meant to dismiss the importance of unemployment as a factor but to show that its role is much more complex than has often been assumed.

Unfortunately these theoretical problems have tended to spill over into weak testing of the different approaches. The social approach is intrinsically difficult to test at an aggregate level though some attempts have been made to relate strike activity statistically to indices of modernisation.³⁴ The economic and organisational approaches, however, have been more often used with what their supporters would claim is some success. That statistical tests show them to be important factors should not surprise us given that any adequate account of strike dynamics must take account of them. What is surprising has been the readiness to claim superiority on the basis of the tests. The problem here is that it is difficult to ensure that the variables against which strikes are regressed are truly independent. Two examples will suffice - if strikes and trade union power influence wage levels, then inadequate testing will make strikes appear as a function of changing wage levels. Equally if strikes influence union organisation, then similarly inadequate testing will make them appear as a function of changing union organisation.³⁵

In fact there is good reason to think that this problem has seriously affected econometric studies of strike series. One of the reasons for this is that while it is possible to get uncorrected monthly strike data, this is not available before 1945 for most other variables.³⁶ Thus if we take Bean and Peel's study as an example, workers may well have struck and then joined trade unions (there are many individual instances of this happening). But if we then relate the annual level of strikes to the changing annual level of union membership we will obviously find a strong relationship and (in the absence of the proper statistical checks) on this basis draw possibly the wrong causal connection.

But even if we apply these approaches properly a more important problem still remains. This is the fact that there is always a residual element of strike action that econometric studies cannot

satisfactorily explain and over time this grows. The value of James Cronin's recent work is that it has focussed on just this point (although it must be recognised that his statistical work is open to much the same sort of criticism as that made above). What he has successfully shown is the way in which the parameters of strike activity can suddenly shift over time so that any strike equation has only a limited life. The reason for this is precisely the wave like character of strikes which leads them to develop explosively in certain periods transforming the character of strike variables as they do so.

To understand how this happens we need to add a fourth element to our understanding of strikes. This missing dimension, which has recently received some attention in industrial relations literature and which we will stress here, is the consciousness of the workers themselves. For a strike to occur the ideas of workers must first change and this transformation will be maintained and perhaps developed as long as the strike lasts. In placing so much weight on this neglected aspect of strike activity there is a danger that we will bend the stick too far. But our intention is not to produce an articulated theory of strikes which 'dialectically' relates structure and consciousness. Rather we want to demonstrate the importance of consciousness in analysing strike dynamics and link this to some wider issues in the analysis of changing class consciousness.

IV

The problem with the previous structural approaches to strikes is that they 'are concerned with the conditions under which strikes are likely to occur rather than with whether they will actually occur'.³⁷ Strikes are important but relatively exceptional events and there is nothing automatic in the way they develop. Workers collectively need to convince themselves that no alternative exists and when they do strike it is seen by them as a distinctive form of action. One aspect of this is the way that the outbreak of a strike involves a visible sign from the workers that they are engaging in a qualitatively different form of collective action. This could be a strike ballot but in its absence the mass meeting, the collective walkout or march on the employer's office or other forms familiar from accounts of individual strikes can act as this signal that the situation has changed.

It is only because we stand outside of the work-

place when we look at strikes that the latter forms of action appear as 'spontaneous'. Once we penetrate behind the factory gate a different perspective comes into view. It then appears that, in the words of one workers' leader at a mass meeting that followed an unplanned walkout at a Welsh slate quarry, 'the storm has been coming for some time'. The precipitant in this case was a dispute between a worker and an undermanager that boiled over. But it had been preceded by growing disagreements during which the attitude of the workers had begun to change. As the argument developed a crowd gathered and when the man 'was sent home they walked out too bringing the rest of the mine with them'.³⁸

It would have been fascinating to have watched this process of strike mobilisation developing. Unfortunately it is only the outbreak of the strike that usually alerts us to the changes that have been taking place. The few inside accounts that we do have of strikes, however, show that they need a qualitative break in workers' ideas for them to occur. The determining influence here seems to be the work group. Within it individuals play a key leadership role in taking up issues and winning the rest of the group over to support for strike action but it is as a collective group that action is finally undertaken. In this sense the development of a strike is a political process involving arguments about objectives and the types of action that will achieve them. Opposition may have to be overcome to any form of action or, more usually, to the strike as a particular tactic.³⁹

This opening up of workers' attitudes and perceptions continues to a greater or lesser extent during the strike itself. To see why, it is necessary to understand how a strike changes the position of workers for its duration. Strikes increase the cohesion of the strikers themselves through emphasising their mutual interdependence; strikes increase reliance on fellow workers; they focus opposition on the employer and in some cases on community leadership and the state; they enable workers to participate in running something for themselves and the experience of the strikers clashes directly with the dominant ideas in society and their own past assumptions.

Clearly the degree to which each of these elements is present will vary from strike to strike. A short 'token' strike will have much less impact than a major and prolonged dispute. For example the token strike may only focus opposition on a particular 'bad' employer and therefore offer only a limited

challenge to ideas of social harmony whereas 'it is not much use to preach the doctrine of the solidarity of the interests of capital and labour as an integral part of a single national unit in the middle of a bitter industrial war'.⁴⁰ But there will also be variation within the different categories of strikes. For example, we need to view the series of short lightning strikes which took place in various hotels in 1913 (and which incidentally were too brief to get into the government statistics) very differently from token action in a strongly organised workplace.⁴¹

This lack of homogeneity means that every strike needs to be understood in its own terms. But it has also been suggested that the differences between strikes are so great that it may not be helpful to define them as the same type of action. It is this thought that appears to lie behind Patrick Joyce's analysis of class relations in the Lancashire cotton industry in later Victorian England. For Joyce the working class experience in this industry was characterised by 'dependence' on the factory and 'deference' to the factory owner. Class feeling was 'contained and eroded' by 'the development in Lancashire of a modern system of industrial relations'. In this 'climate' a 'groundswell of local disputation' often led to brief one day strikes (or less) which had an 'almost ritual quality' and which were largely 'domestic and ceremonial affairs'.⁴²

This is not the place to deal with Joyce's overall thesis but his analysis of this type of strike as 'almost ritualized' is important because it expresses a widespread attitude amongst historians as well as echoing the strand of analysis that dominated the examination of strikes in the 1950s and 1960s. The problems with it are many. In the first place the idea that strikes occur within an institutionalised framework reflects more the experience of employers and union officials. From the workers' point of view strikes have meaning more in terms of work as they experience it than an abstract 'system' into which they may only be partially integrated.⁴³ Unfortunately the labour process and the various shopfloor practices that developed to deal with it are conspicuously absent both from this type of analysis in general and from Joyce's in particular. What then happens is that a line is drawn between this 'groundswell of disputation' and the big disputes that did periodically break out in cotton and other industries rather than an attempt being made to understand the links between them.⁴⁴

Strikes do involve both ritual and ceremony (which must be understood) but it is doubtful if they are ever simply 'rituals'. The potential costs are hardly ever so low if only in terms of the possible dismissal of 'the leaders'.⁴⁵ But perhaps the most important point and the element that links all strikes is that they are exceptional events. If their meaning is so limited, we are entitled to ask why they did not occur more often and more widely. The fact that they are exceptional suggests that we cannot properly dismiss all of the elements we have identified even in the smallest disputes.

But if the degree to which the different elements are present varies between strikes so it will also vary over time in the same strike. One important consequence of this is the way in which a strike demands change. As Bean has emphasised 'because a strike is a dynamic phenomenon the emphasis accorded to particular issues can alter during its course'.⁴⁶ In most major strikes this internal dynamic tends to operate in two directions. One is to increase militancy and broaden demands, perhaps bringing to the surface issues that were latent when the strike originally began. This is particularly important given that wage issues were given as the 'principal causes' of disputes in 62 percent of strikes between 1893 and 1914. This does not necessarily imply limited objectives; we have to recognise that 'since wages stand for more than can be bought with them, wage strikes tend to be symbolic of wider grievances'. But the internal dynamic of the strike can also involve a wearing down of enthusiasm preparing the way for a return to work. Too often historians have seen this simply as a response to distress. This underpinned many defeats when workers were forced back but 'to understand the progress of a dispute toward peace the changing subjective attitudes and beliefs of the parties are a key element to be understood'.⁴⁷

An obvious problem in understanding these issues is that we have few accounts of strikes written from the inside with an eye to these issues but this does not mean that no evidence is available. Both the character of the strike itself and the behaviour of workers as well as the overall pattern of strike activity are clues to the nature of strike action. If we look afresh at questions like the size of support for strikes, the nature of strike meetings, picketing, the language of the strike, forms of mutual aid and so on there is sufficient evidence to allow us to map out, sometimes directly,

sometimes indirectly, the way in which consciousness changed over time.

The character of the strike organisation is particularly important since a strike which involves little participation is likely to result in boredom and quickly dissipate support. This raises the problem of the control both of the strike committee by the workers and of the negotiations undertaken by the strike committee. The tensions involved here reflect the significant 'unofficial' element in most strikes. In the first place the process of calling a strike is usually unofficial; 'although most strikes are controlled by trade unions, cases are comparatively rare in this country in which the central committee of a trade union takes the initiative and directs its members to cease work.'⁴⁸ In fact although the majority of strikes were later made formally or tacitly official in our period there were a significant core which were never approved. This runs counter to the general view which tends to see unofficial strikes as being more a feature of the period after 1910. But this does not accord with evidence collected by the Board of Trade in the early 1890s. This seems to show that roughly a quarter of the strikes it investigated had not been approved for various reasons. Table 4.3 presents the data for 1895 when it is also possible to calculate the average size of these strikes which interestingly turn out to be quite large in contemporary terms.

But the 'unofficial' nature of strike action extends also into its running: 'when a strike has been authorised by the executive the conduct of it is frequently entrusted to a "strike committee" appointed ad hoc...' There are a number of reasons for this. Strikes would often involve more than one union and they therefore needed a leadership which would overcome to some extent the sectionalism of union organisation. In our period too, many strikes involved significant numbers of non unionists who also needed to be represented. In the slate dispute we noted earlier, out of the 486 workers in the quarry only 125 were in the union and only 75 of them were paid up. The running of the strike therefore fell to a 24 man strike committee elected at a mass meeting following the walkout. But even where union organisation was strong it was common for strikes to be run outside of the usual union structure. A good example of this was the role of 'lock-out' committees in the 1897 engineering dispute. Here and in similar instances the fact that the

Table 4.3: Trade Union Attitudes to Strikes, 1895 49

	% surveyed strikes	average strikers per strike
Approved strikes	72	114
Not approved	12	238
Disapproved	1	144
Not ordered	5	100
Not ordered but approved	3	275
Not consulted	2	191
No union	2	384
Chiefly non union	3	883

strike breaks the routine of industrial relations was reflected also in a break in the routine framework of the organisation of workers.⁵⁰

The responsibility of strike committees could vary widely. Three issues were crucial to the running of a strike. One was finance; normally in local strikes in organised industries strike pay was paid centrally by the union, ten to fifteen shillings a week being a widely quoted figure for an adult male although a large dispute would quickly exhaust funds.⁵¹ Strike committee funds had therefore to be collected by the strikers themselves and they were used not only to provide for additional help to strikers or strike pay itself where there was no strong union but also, on some occasions, to pay the return fares of imported blacklegs. Collecting money was not only important to materially support the strike; it also served as both a focus of activity for the strikers themselves and as a means of gaining support. The typical balance sheet below of a strike gives some idea both of the nature of support and the importance attached to getting it. Collectors travelled all over the north of England and support came for these strikers from all over the country and abroad.

The second issue that had to be faced in all but the briefest strikes was escalation. In general the more complete the strike the greater its chance of success. But a strike committee had to consider three issues. Employers appear often to have resorted to 'sympathy lock-outs' to pressure and divide strikers. Equally if the strike committee

Table 4.4: The Manningham Mills Strike Balance Sheet⁵²

	£	s.	d.
Income			
Collections in boxes	7,348	19	5½
Trade societies	1,386	9	1½
Co-operative societies	81	5	0½
Private Subscribers and friends	194	3	10
Bradford Trades Council Fund	1,152	14	0½
Collections in chapels and churches	25	1	4
Collections in clubs	24	13	10½
Concerts and football matches	54	11	5
Income from soup kitchen	70	6	5
Emigration fund	49	15	0
Miscellaneous	719	3	6½
Total	£11,107	3	1d
Expenditure			
Relief	8,300	10	11
Food and lodgings for collectors	1,200	0	0
Railway fares	884	12	1½
Printing and rent	172	10	4
Emigration	161	16	8
Bands	91	11	7½
Soup Kitchen	70	6	5
Wages to committee	40	16	0
Miscellaneous	174	19	0
Total	£11,097	3	1d

itself escalated the strike, it could seriously increase its financial burdens. Fear of this sometimes led to what with hindsight appears a tactical error - instead of trying to spread a strike from the outset this was often left to a last desperate action which itself could then contribute to defeat.⁵³ But the third problem was that any escalation had itself to be argued for. Here sectional considerations often intervened. Craft based strikers tended to rely upon their own strength and only reluctantly involve other groups. But sectionalism also meant that other groups were reluctant to respond when asked and many strikes came to grief because of lack of support from small but strategi-

cally situated groups. The solution that was central to the arguments of the syndicalists before 1914 was both to amalgamate unions and in strikes to link demands between groups so as to generalise the issues involved.

The other decisive issue for the strike committee was its role in negotiations. Here the tension with the official trade union organisation was most apparent and conflict was commonplace. Unfortunately we still lack a detailed analysis of the development of the trade union bureaucracy so that it is difficult to generalise but it seems clear that the power of strike committees where organisation already existed was related to the degree of shopfloor power before the strike broke out. The degree of formalisation of collective bargaining was also important and the fact that it tended still to be local before 1914 gave strike committees potentially more power over the strike.

'Seizing the sense of the action' is therefore complex but an important part of understanding any strike and its potential.⁵⁴ Of course the potential might not be realised. Some strikes, though surprisingly few, were turned to frankly reactionary ends - notoriously against alien workers. Others were directed against other groups of workers over such issues as demarcation. Just how many is difficult to say because they were classified by the Board of Trade in the 'statistical ragbag category' of 'employment of particular classes of persons'. Between 1893 and 1914 this accounted for fourteen percent of all disputes and only some seven percent of all strikers. But because this category groups together six different causes, even this vastly overstates the significance of these disputes. Moreover they tended to be heavily concentrated in particular sectors, especially shipbuilding.⁵⁵ It was most common for strikes to remain trapped within the sectional framework of existing union organisation. Sectionalism of this kind is usually associated with craft unions but critics of 'new unionism' have argued that it was no less present there. Bean, for example, in an analysis of 'new' unionist strikes in the Liverpool docks in 1890 has claimed that they were 'torn by factional considerations and concern for self-interest.' There is probably much justification in this in the sense both that sectionalism is to an extent implicit in union organisation itself and that the fragmented nature of British industrial relations intensified it.⁵⁶ But this argument misses the point.

Even the most sectional disputes have a rationality in terms of the defence of an existing situation against 'encroachments'. Here it is important to recognise that sectionalism is based upon a group strength which operates both against the employer and often union officials to the advantage of the workers themselves. The difficulty is that when that strength is challenged opposition is directed at other workers. Nevertheless strike action, particularly in major disputes, can still act to open up the perspectives of even the most sectional of groups. In the 1897 engineering dispute, for example, the polarisation was so intense (even the normally sane Alfred Marshall declared 'I want these people beaten at all cost') that the engineers were finally forced to look for wider support, though it proved too late to save them. But this end was not inevitable; because they were based upon an underlying strength and continuity of shopfloor organisation, these groups could also be the basis for a rapid radicalisation such as the engineers were themselves to experience in the First World War.⁵⁷ It is also important to recognise that the predominance of sectional considerations depends upon the overall character of strike activity, an issue to which we must now turn.

VI

The degree to which ideas change not only varies within and between strikes; it also varies over time. To see why, we need to decompose the changes in consciousness themselves. Necessarily this will be schematic because ideas do not change in accord with neat categories but it is nevertheless useful to make the attempt. Michael Mann has helpfully distinguished between four aspects of class consciousness: class identity - the definition of oneself as working class; class opposition - the perception of employers and their agents as enduring class opponents; class totality - making both identity and opposition the central defining feature of one's total situation; and class alternative - the conception of an alternative form of social organisation. If the radicalisation in strikes were simply cumulative, an escalation would take place through the four elements. But we know that class totality and, even more, class alternative views amongst large groups of workers have been relatively rare. One reason for this is that the capacity of strikes to generate radicalisation fluctuates with

the level of strike activity. To see how this operated we will contrast the strike pattern in the 1890s and 1900s with that in the strike wave of 1910-14.⁵⁸

Strikes fought in the 1890s and early 1900s were primarily defensive, undertaken when the balance of forces was swinging against the workers. In the 1890s the extent of this swing was uneven as a relative domestic boom sustained strikes in some sectors, particularly building which recorded a fifth of all officially recorded disputes between 1893 and 1901 (an average of 157 a year). The tail off in strikes became more general in the 1900s when, for instance, building strikes constituted only six percent of all disputes between 1902-10 (averaging only 27 per annum). At the same time the downturn was also complemented by the well known legal moves against strikes and unions.

In this context disputes could result in considerable polarisation but in the absence of any attempt to link them they tended to take place in relative isolation from one another. This served to limit and mark the ideas that workers developed through strike action. To go on strike workers had to have a degree of confidence that they could win but the overall situation was clearly against them. One hostile contemporary misusing the strike statistics calculated that the odds were 150 : 100 against winning strikes; 'this fact should be an argument against strikes, in the eyes of workpeople, especially when they bear in mind that the cost to them, to their families, and to their trade organisations is relatively greater, than the cost to employers'. But this attitude also spread to many socialist leaders who considered that the strike weapon was increasingly being made outmoded by the power of capital.⁵⁹

The inevitable result was to narrow strike perspectives and make it difficult to generalise any local militancy that did arise. The defensive nature of strikes in these years is reflected in their concern with workers' 'dignity'. Under the pressure of competition, technological changes and new work practices were forced through in a number of industries. Once, however, workers' confidence was bolstered, perhaps by a local economic upturn and fuller order books, they could strike to push back the tide. But to win they had to rely more upon their own strength, upon what Ben Tillett called 'funds and sectional combination'. Obviously this tended to benefit craft unionism and those new

unions that could adopt craft practices. Indeed behind these there was a consolidation of trade unionism in these years. Although workers were regularly defeated, apparently comprehensively in some instances, they were able to keep informal shopfloor organisation surprisingly intact and push some employers into a 'stalemate' position.⁶⁰

In Mann's terms strikes generally led to an oscillation between class identity and opposition. Only in localised instances (mainly in the great 'labour wars' of the 1890s) can we detect consciousness going beyond this. This limited radicalisation can also be related to the distribution of strikes between industries. As we have seen, one of the conditioning factors that affects strike activity is the availability of 'resources' to workers allowing them to strike. What distinguishes a 'strike-prone' industry is the capacity of its workers to sustain a higher level of striking in these downturns. But within a generally unfavourable climate this unequal distribution of resources between workers is unlikely to be more harshly felt and therefore class opposition and unity reduced as it is perceived that only some groups have access to strikes as a weapon.

However, an upturn in militancy and a strike wave such as that of 1910-14 changes the context and the character of strike activity. In this period the balance of forces swung in favour of the workers and strikes of this period became more offensive and less isolated. The central feature of a strike wave is the way in which strike action is generalised reinforcing both class identity and opposition and creating the basis for a move to class totality and perhaps beyond. It is this aspect of changing ideas that gives strike waves what Knowles called 'a certain momentum' within and between industries.⁶¹

A measure of the difference in context is given by the changing proportion of strikers in the labour force which is given in Table 4.5 on the basis of the Board of Trade's calculations. Throughout the period a minority of workers went on strike but the size and distribution of that minority could change quite dramatically and the extent of the 'labour unrest' comes out fully. In particular, even allowing for those who went on strike more than once in these years it would seem that between a fifth and a quarter of the labour force went on an officially recorded strike at some point.

Here it is possible to talk of an 'explosion of consciousness' taking place. To Tom Mann, 'rushing from strike to strike, it seemed as if workers were

Table 4.5: Percentage of the Working Population Involved in Disputes, by Trade, 1893-1913 62

	Build- ing	Coal mining	Other Mining	M/E/S*	Textile	Clothing	Other	All Trades**
1893	1.9	74.7	2.4	2.7	3.6	1.9	0.7	7.5
1894	1.6	31.2	0.9	2.5	3.2	1.0	0.5	3.8
1895	1.1	11.9	1.6	4.0	5.2	8.6	0.2	3.0
1896	3.6	8.9	4.9	4.0	2.7	0.7	0.3	2.2
1897	1.6	7.0	1.0	7.8	3.1	1.2	0.6	2.6
1898	1.7	25.2	1.6	1.7	2.1	0.6	0.2	2.8
1899	3.1	6.3	1.3	1.6	5.1	0.4	0.4	2.0
1900	1.9	9.1	3.3	1.5	2.0	0.4	0.1	2.0
1901	0.9	13.7	3.3	1.6	1.4	0.7	0.3	1.9
1902	0.5	25.5	1.0	1.1	1.4	0.4	0.2	2.7
1903	0.3	7.2	2.5	2.2	0.8	0.4	0.1	1.2
1904	0.8	5.4	1.1	0.9	1.1	0.2	0.1	0.9
1905	0.6	4.8	3.1	0.9	1.3	0.5	0.2	0.9
1906	0.1	9.4	1.6	2.9	6.3	1.3	0.1	2.1
1907	0.1	5.4	1.9	1.3	3.9	1.7	0.3	1.4
1908	0.3	8.9	0.7	4.0	11.0	0.7	0.2	2.8
1909	0.1	26.5	1.8	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.1	2.8
1910	0.1	28.6	1.2	3.7	10.7	0.6	0.5	4.9
1911	0.3	13.0	1.2	5.9	17.8	1.3	9.8	9.0
1912	0.6	93.2	0.8	4.6	4.5	4.2	3.6	13.4
1913	4.4	18.6	8.7	8.3	6.7	2.0	2.5	5.6

* Metal, engineering and shipbuilding

** Excludes agricultural labourers and seamen.

being moved by 'a psychic wave', but the spirit of militancy had a real tangibility. Class identity and class opposition now reinforced one another and flowed into class totality as new possibilities were opened up on a broader front. At times the actions of workers instinctively pushed beyond this. Holton has spoken of the development of 'proto-syndicalism' - 'forms of social action which lie between vague revolt and clear cut revolutionary action' - as being characteristic of some strikes in these years. Capitalist relations and state power were confronted by apparently 'spontaneous' actions which upon closer investigation reveal a much more clearly articulated set of goals even if not a full consciousness of a class alternative.⁶³

Within this militancy it was possible to challenge some of the former limitations of the labour movement. Previously backward groups of workers leapt to the fore, a process in evidence in the transport strikes but which was also reflected in the higher visibility of women strikers. Sectional issues did not disappear but they became easier to resolve as it became possible to generalise arguments and link strike demands. One reflection of this, at first sight paradoxical, is that there were actually few strikes which were principally sympathy actions - between 1911-13 the Board of Trade recorded only 37 involving 25,733 workers. But this did not mean that there was little sympathetic action; rather workers who were encouraged to strike by the militancy of their colleagues were making their own demands felt as well.

Here informal links were often as important as formal ones. They particularly benefited workers who had not been on strike before. One indication of this is the way that strike duration changed. The fall noted in table 4.1 was not distributed evenly across all strikes as an emphasis on broad structural determinants might lead us to expect. It was in the smallest disputes that the fall was the most dramatic; for example, in 1908-10 strikes involving less than 25 workers averaged 24.1 days but in 1911-13 they averaged only 10.4 days. Similarly, those involving less than 100 workers averaged respectively 23.8 days and 12.9 days in the two periods. Since workers were winning more gains in these years it is unlikely that this can be explained by small, unsuccessful strikes though even a new willingness to strike and risk being defeated would be an important sign. What seems more important was the growing confidence of the workers themselves and a related loss of confidence by employers. This

affected strike duration in other ways too. Between 1905-9 39 percent of strikes lasted less than a week and 71 percent less than a month but in the strike wave 46 percent were settled within a week and 80 percent within a month. At the other end of the scale 4.7 percent of strikes lasted more than 20 weeks in 1905-9 but only 2.45 percent in 1910-13.

The related loss of confidence by employers can be seen in the way that in key industries like shipping and the railways opposition to unions which had lasted for decades was overthrown. But evidence of this also exists in the records of the results of strikes collected by the Board of Trade. These are perhaps best understood as a measure of what was believed to be happening rather than as an objective index of actual results but even in this more limited sense they are revealing. Forchheimer, in what remains the only serious study of this aspect of strikes, noted that employers' victories and compromises seemed to move closely with the economic cycle. Suggesting that 'compromises' should be understood as a disguised category for workers' victories, he then argued that employers were more willing to make concessions in prosperous years.⁶⁴ This argument contains an important truth but it misses the fact that there is an even closer relationship between the number of strikes and the proportion of employers' victories - the more strikes, proportionally the fewer victories they claimed, suggesting once again that the analysis of strikes has to focus on more than structural factors and must examine the hopes and fears of those involved.

VII

So far we have concentrated on the internal nature of strike dynamics. It remains now to look at some of the wider ramifications of strikes. If our emphasis on the importance of consciousness is correct, then we would expect increases in strike frequency to be reflected in, and interact with, a developing class consciousness spreading beyond those directly and indirectly involved. Correspondingly downturns in strike activity would have the opposite effects. But in spite of the importance of these links, their precise form has not been investigated and all we can do here is to focus on some of the possibilities.

One interesting aspect to consider is whether individualised responses to alienation and exploitation such as suicide, drunkenness, crime, etc. might

be related to strike levels. Suicide can serve as an illustration of the possible mechanism. Opponents of strikes often spoke of their dire effects on all involved. In the 1912 London dock strike, for example, it was claimed that several blacklegs had been driven to commit suicide by hostility and resentment at work and in the community.⁶⁵ But the more likely effect of strikes would seem to be that by creating a more optimistic and collective climate for change they actually diminished suicide. Obviously these effects would be felt most by those directly and indirectly involved. Hence there is more than propaganda in the frequent reports of the way in which 'good order' was maintained during major strikes. But the ramifications could spread beyond those immediately affected. If we follow Durkheim's classic analysis then we could see strikes as a method of social integration along class lines in which unity is forged against a common enemy (on both sides!) so creating a new meaning in some people's lives. Following this hypothesis, Stack has recently claimed that there is an inverse relationship, internationally between strikes and suicide.⁶⁶ Problems with the British statistics may well preclude an investigation to see if this holds historically but the hypothesis is not inconsistent with what we know already. Anderson, for example, has argued that 'expanding industrial towns ... often seemed places of hope and betterment' to workers and so had lower suicide rates but it is at least possible that this 'hope of betterment' involved a collective dimension too.⁶⁷

At a broader level, strikes had an important impact on the character of the working class community. Strikers were obviously drawn from the working class community and this itself gave their struggles a wider dimension. But beyond this the need for support and solidarity meant that they often took their strikes directly into the community. Here the evidence of strike funds can be helpful. During strikes middle and lower middle class support was often forthcoming, though the extent of support in the 1889 London dock strike when strikers were 'helped by subscriptions from the City, cheered on by stock brokers' was quite untypical.⁶⁸ It is important, however, to examine the terms of this support. Often it was an expression of concern for wives and children which involved opposition to the strike itself; fear could equally be a motivating factor. Open support for strikes and strikers was also forthcoming as their cases gained wider

sympathy but this was less widespread and sometimes dependent on the strikers acting within narrow limits. The evidence of strike funds (implying a degree of support for the strike itself) is that support came largely from the working class itself, either through trade unions or community collections. Generating support here often involved considerable enterprise beyond simple collections - from concerts to football matches, to the hiring of brass bands and the setting up of tours by working class choirs.

The interaction of strikes and the working class community obviously depended upon the nature of the community itself. It was easier to build links where it was well established and institutionally strong than in cities like London and Birmingham where there was considerable industrial and social fragmentation.⁶⁹ It has been argued that in these places individuals 'were often unable to articulate any real grievances that they might have felt' leaving it open to conservative and nationalist propaganda to give some direction to their discontents. But the 'labour unrest' after 1910, at least in the case of Birmingham, produced 'a positive growth of a class-conscious solidarity' in which, interestingly, skilled engineers played an important role in coming to the aid of the unskilled and unorganised.⁷⁰ Indeed, even the sharpest sectarian divisions could be challenged by strike action. In 1907 in Belfast a major transport strike became 'the first strike in the history of modern Ireland in which the workers forgot their party divisions and combined ... against the employers.' In a long dispute the strikers maintained an impressive unity against attempts to divide them on religious lines, although the defeat of the strike paved the way for a reinforcement of these divisions. But the potential of strikes to force a unity across the religious divide (because, as one protestant strike leader put it, 'men of both faiths ... were determined to stand together against the common enemy, the employer') was again to be demonstrated in Liverpool in 1911 and Dublin in 1913.⁷¹

In a number of instances strikes also came to serve as the focal point of community resentment. The Manningham Mills strike, for example, in Bradford in 1890 had much community support but when the town leadership was seen to be siding with the employer it multiplied. 'Riots' took place and attendance at meetings rose at one point from a few thousand to an estimated 60,000 as the issues

involved broadened beyond the strike itself.⁷² In agriculturally based Norfolk 'rural war' in the 1870s played an important part in challenging the power of the village troika of squire, parson and farmer, and then again before 1914 strikes led to a shift away from the predominance of liberalism.⁷³ Then alongside these relatively localised examples we have to set the bigger disputes that produced large scale community conflict, particularly those of the 'labour unrest' such as the well documented cases of Tonypany in 1910, Hull and Liverpool in 1911 and Belfast in 1913. Indeed, the analysis of community unrest could probably be pursued much more widely than this. In the West Midlands, for example, 'the prairie fire strikes' of 1913 were preceded by disputes over rents that landlords labelled 'the tenants' war'.⁷⁴

Strikes that 'boiled over' in this way were one of the factors that involved the state in industrial affairs. The common view of industrial relations as a voluntarist system in which the state played a minimal role is misleading. Voluntarism, like 'laissez-faire', had to be created and then maintained. Both required much behind the scenes manipulation particularly from the innovative Board of Trade.⁷⁵ Different degrees of voluntarism also existed and it has been argued that the fragmentation of the industrial and union structure in Britain made necessary a greater degree of state intervention than in other voluntarist systems.⁷⁶ The 1893 miners' lock-out was a turning point in open ministerial intervention. But the pattern was really consolidated by the strikes before 1914. Ministerial intervention gave strikes an overtly political dimension which Asquith was not alone in fearing would lead to 'the degradation of government' if it was seen to fail.⁷⁷

It was as a 'public order' issue though that strikes made the state most visible, contributing a neglected but important element to the tradition of working class hostility to the police, army and state itself. Strikes were immediately dealt with in these terms by the local police force aided where necessary by neighbouring forces. The Metropolitan Police then acted as a national backup for beleaguered local forces. But troops were also used in any emergency. In 1908 a Royal Commission investigating their use found that they had been involved 24 times since 1870. They had opened fire twice, first in the 'Featherstone Massacre' of 1893 when they had killed two and injured a dozen. This was the first

time for half a century that troops had opened fire on civilians at home. Then again in Belfast in 1907 troops opened fire (parts of the police force were near to mutiny), killing three and wounding more in the midst of transport strikes. But if firing was relatively rare, what General Macready called 'a little gentle persuasion with the bayonet' was more common. It was the 'labour unrest' however, that fully revealed the problems of control that strikes could pose for the state. The Royal Commission had considered that it was inappropriate to use troops in civil strife and recommended a wider use of the Metropolitan Police.⁷⁸ Churchill initially tried to honour this commitment but troops were soon in use in South Wales in 1910; in Cardiff and Liverpool in 1911 when they were joined by a cruiser; and then in August 1911 in the transport strikes, when almost every home based unit was mobilised, troops were deployed in over 30 towns. Two people were killed in Liverpool and a further two in Llanelli in Wales. This widespread deployment was not an aberration nor can it be explained as a Churchillian foible. Although there were internal debates about the extent of deployment, it had widespread support within government. Rather it reflected the way in which a major industrial dispute could polarise issues on a much wider scale and the difficulties that governments had in dealing with them. In a modern industrial society strikes have always been the biggest and most important challenges to government and the state.⁷⁹

But perhaps the most important link that needs to be made is that between strikes and the development and consequent character of the labour movement. The existence of a significant level of workplace conflict and strikes before 1914 suggests that working class attitudes were far more nuanced and less committed to the existing system than has often been allowed. And in major disputes, especially in strike waves, that ambiguity could be opened up on a considerable scale. But the fact still remains that relatively little of the political potential created by this type of action was channelled into support for socialist politics. Instead the break between industrial and political life became an institutionalised part of the labour movement.

Because of the radicalisation they involved, workplace conflict and strikes could act as a bridge to socialist politics. But strikes cannot last indefinitely and any radicalisation has to be given a firmer foundation and built upon if the potential is

to develop. Equally an intervention by socialists in strikes could have been significant both in tactical terms, generalising the experience of different groups and in giving them legitimacy and support. Yet much of the history of socialism is marked by indifference and often outright hostility to these issues.

Socialists were eager to use strikes as a general propaganda weapon; 'to be a trade unionist and fight for your class during a strike and to be a Tory or a Liberal and fight against your class at an election is a folly' declared Robert Blatchford in his *Merrie England* and many socialists would have echoed this, but the point was more often than not simply propaganda. When troops fired on workers in Belfast in 1907 Blatchford condemned attacks on 'the ordinary Tommy'.⁸⁰ Strikes themselves were often deprecated as a working class weapon both for their ineffectiveness and their inappropriateness. For the Social Democratic Federation they were a 'malign obsession'; in the midst of the 'labour-unrest' Hyndman asked, 'can anything be imagined, more harmful, more in the widest sense of the word, unsocial than a strike ...? I have never yet advocated a strike ... I have never known ... a successful strike.'⁸¹ In the ILP and Labour Party the strength of the trade union link did mean that some national support was forthcoming but it was relatively lukewarm and disappeared at the first sign of union opposition to strikes or violence. Moreover the background of support when it was forthcoming was a scepticism about the value of strikes almost as deep as Hyndman's.⁸² These attitudes persisted despite the fact that as individuals many socialists were heavily involved in strikes and supporting them, a contradiction which deserves more investigation.⁸³

The roots of this indifference and hostility lay partly in the rigidity of socialist theory (especially in the case of the SDF), but more deeply in the commitment to parliamentary reform and particularly in the ILP - Labour Party nexus, the relationship with the trade union establishment which, after the defeat of the arguments of Tom Mann and others in the ILP in the early 1890s, involved a tacit recognition of the limits of intervention by socialists in union affairs. But beneath these important considerations there was another element too - this was a deep hostility to working class attitudes and actions that many socialists shared. Workers were to be educated into socialism but they would not find their own way there. This attitude

had deep roots, some of which can be traced to the set of ideas that made up what Yeo has called 'the religion of socialism' which developed in the 1880s and early 1890s.⁸⁴ It was later well captured by Robert Tressell whose book *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* both shows the revulsion against workers, at the same time as its continuing uncritical popularity attests to how widespread these attitudes were.

As he thought of his child's future there sprung up within him a feeling of hatred and fury against the majority of his fellow workmen. They were the enemy. Those who not only quietly submitted like so many cattle to the existing state of things, but defended it, and ridiculed any suggestion to alter it ... (and on for the rest of the page and in various forms throughout the book) ... No wonder the rich despised them and looked upon them as dirt. They were despicable. They were dirt. They admitted it and gloried in it.⁸⁵

Tressell's workers do not strike; their small attempts to get back at their employer are deprecated; there is no argument for them to join a trade union even though we learn towards the end of the book that the hero is a trade unionist himself. Instead socialism is simply an abstract utopia and in the end it is not the workers who offer any hope of it but a member of the middle class with money. Thus strike action and working class resistance at work more generally stood at a tangent to left wing politics before the First World War. Occasionally individuals questioned this but it was not until the development of syndicalism that however haltingly, ambiguously and ultimately inadequately, a break with this was made and politics began to be put back into work - where it has always been.⁸⁶

Nevertheless, even if strikes and militancy stood at a tangent to the development of socialist politics, they still affected it by creating the context in which particular developments were possible. It is a commonplace, for instance, that the development of the Labour Representation Committee was a product of industrial defeat in the 1890s. But it is less often recognised that these defeats, through the dampening effects they had on militancy, made possible the form of alliance where socialism was doubly subordinated to the binds of Hardie's 'Labour Alliance' with the trade union bureaucracy

and the 'Labour-Liberal Alliance'. Equally when the upturn in strikes and militancy came after 1910, it underpinned the challenge to these narrow organisational and ideological horizons.⁸⁷ The leadership of the Labour Party was thrown heavily on the defensive despite a rhetorical shift to the left as the strikes and related actions raised the fundamental question of what direction the labour movement should move in. When Tom Mann and others were arrested for the famous leaflet calling on troops not to fire on striking workers the disillusioned ILP'er Leonard Hall saw it as a litmus test,

the little crowd of dried Tories who have for years been labelling themselves "socialists" - even "Revolutionary Socialists" with the capital "R" (have been) tumbling over each other since the "mutiny" prosecutions to disclaim and repudiate any connection or even sympathy with the disreputable and unholy thing "Syndicalism".

But this view of the role of the Labour Party and the ILP was not just that of a radicalised left-winger. Lloyd George expressed the same thought; he argued that 'Syndicalism' and 'Socialism' (by which he meant the Labour Party) were 'mutually destructive', 'the best policeman for the Syndicalist is the Socialist':

There is this guarantee for society, that one microbe can be trusted to kill another, and the microbe of Socialism, which may be a very beneficent one, does at any rate keep guard upon the other, which is a very dangerous and perilous one. I have, therefore, no real fear of the Syndicalist.⁸⁸

NOTES

1. *Annual Report on Strikes and Lockouts for 1900*, PP 1902, pp.36-7. All unattributed strike statistics have been drawn from these annual reports.

2. E.H. Hunt, *British Labour History 1815-1914* (London, 1981), p.306.

3. A. Reid, 'Politics and Economics in the

Formation of the British Working Class: a response to H.F. Moorhouse', *Social History*, 3(3), 1978, pp. 347-63; J. Melling, 'The Workplace and the Rise of Labour', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 42, 1981, pp.44-8.

4. K.G.J.C. Knowles, *Strikes: A Study in Industrial Conflict* (Oxford, 1952), p.xii; B.Holton, *British Syndicalism 1900-1914: Myths and Realities* (London, 1976), p.77.

5. Benson, *supra*; M. Mann, *Consciousness and Action Among the Western Working Class* (London, 1973), p.30.

6. J. Cronin, *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain* (London, 1979), *passim*; J. Cronin, 'Strikes 1870-1914', in C. Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations 1875-1914* (Brighton, 1982), pp. 79-98.

7. P. Stearns, 'Measuring the Evolution of Strike Movements', *International Review of Social History*, xix (1), 1974, pp.1-27.

8. S.W. Creigh, 'The Origins of British Strike Statistics', *Business History*, xxiv(1), 1982, pp. 95-106.

9. G. Bevan, 'The Strikes of the Past Ten Years', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, xlii (1), 1880, pp.35, 37, 52, 58.

10. *Strikes and Lockouts for 1888*, PP 1889, p.3.

11. R. Price, *Masters, unions and men: Work control in building and the rise of labour 1830-1914* (Cambridge, 1980).

12. M. Silver, 'Recent British Strike Trends: A Factual Analysis', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, xi(1), 1973, pp.66-104.

13. G. Ingham, *Strikes and Industrial Conflict: Britain and Scandinavia* (London, 1974), pp.26-8; E. Batstone, I. Boraston and S. Frenkel, *The Social Organisation of Strikes* (Oxford, 1978), ch.2.

14. H. Llewellyn Smith, 'Strikes and Lockouts', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, xxxiii (London, 1902 ed.), p.1,024.

15. K. Burgess, *The Origins of British Industrial Relations* (London, 1975), p.228.

16. Calculated from S.J. Chapman and T.S. Ashton, 'The Size of Businesses, mainly in the Textile Industries', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, lxxvii (5), 1914, table xxvii, p.548.

17. Calculated from *British Labour Statistics, Historical Abstract 1886-1968* (London, 1971), table 197. The official strike data in this table and table 4.2 differ from others quoted in this paper in

that they refer to Great Britain and Northern Ireland instead of Great Britain and Ireland and the numbers of strikers refers to both those directly and indirectly affected at plants on strike. These differences are necessary as this is the only series that distinguishes coalmining.

18. H.A. Turner, *Is Britain Really Strike Prone?: A Review of the Incidence, Character and Costs of Industrial Conflict* (Cambridge, 1969), p. 18.

19. J.W. Cunliffe, 'Modern Industrial Warfare', *Westminster Review*, cxl (2), 1893, pp.109-14. This is an interesting contemporary comparison of the two strikes.

20. W.H. Abraham, 'The Hull Strike', *The Economic Review*, 3, (4), 1893, p.359.

21. A. Gouldner, *Wildcat Strike* (London, 1955), p.65.

22. P. Stearns, 'The Unskilled and Industrialisation; a Transformation of Consciousness', *Archiv für Sozial Geschichte*, xvi, 1976, pp.264-7.

23. For comparative data of this kind see Ingham, *Strikes* and especially W.Korpi and M.Shalev, 'Strikes, Power and Politics in Western Nations, 1900-1976', *Political Power and Social Theory*, 1, 1980, pp.301-34.

24. E.J. Hobsbawm, 'Economic Fluctuations and Social Movements since 1800', *Economic History Review*, v (1), 1952, pp.1-25.

25. It may well be that future research will show that earlier strike waves occurred. It should also be noted that Cronin in the works cited in footnote 6 uses the Board of Trade series from 1888 as if it is consistent therefore making unreliable comparisons between the strike wave of 1888-91 and later periods

26. J. Schooling, 'Strikes and Lock-outs, 1892-1901', *Fortnightly Review*, n.s. 75, 1904, pp.849-63.

27. Cronin, *Industrial Conflict*, *passim*.

28. R. Hyman, *Strikes* (London, 1977; 2nd ed.), p.173; E. Batstone, 'Strikes and Sociologists', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 28, 1976, pp.86-90; R. Stern, 'Methodological Issues of Quantitative Strike Analysis', *Industrial Relations*, 7 (3), 1978, pp.32-42.

29. R. Bean and D.A. Peel, 'Business Activity, Labour Organisation and Industrial Disputes in the United Kingdom, 1892-1938', *Business History*, xvii (2), 1976, pp.205-11; see also C. Ragin, S.Coverman and M. Hayward, 'Major Labour Disputes in Britain, 1902-1938: the Relationship between Resource

Expenditure and Outcome', *American Sociological Review*, 42 (2), 1982, pp.238-52.

30. P.K. Edwards, 'The "Social" Determination of Strike Activity: an Explanation and Critique', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 21 (2), 1979. For attempts to apply the 'social' analysis historically see Stearns, 'Measuring', and P. Stearns, *Lives of Labour* (London, 1975), ch.4-6, 9.

31. For an introduction to this, see C. Mulvey, *The Economic Analysis of Trade Unions* (Oxford, 1978) and for the steps in the development of the argument see J. Hicks, *The Theory of Wages* (London, 1932); O.C. Ashenfelter and G.E. Johnson, 'Bargaining Theory, Trade Unions and Industrial Strike Activity', *American Economic Review*, 59 (1), 1969, pp.33-49; D. Sapsford, 'The Theory of Bargaining and Strike Activity', in D. Sapsford *et.al.* (eds.), *Strikes, Theory and Activity* (Bradford, 1982).

32. The most common approach has been to relate strike activity to economic conditions; see, for example, E. Phelps Brown, *The Growth of British Industrial Relations* (London, 1959); H. Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain* (London, 1968); Hunt, *Labour History*; E. Hopkins, 'An Anatomy of Strikes in the Stourbridge Glass Industry, 1850-1914', *Midland History*, ii (1), 1973, pp.21-31.

33. Pelling, *Popular Politics*, pp.149-51; William Collison claimed that between 1893-1909 his strike breaking National Free Labour Association broke 680 strikes. This represents only 7% of all recorded strikes and is usually regarded as a grossly exaggerated claim. Pelling himself in an earlier work has noted the difficulties employers had in using blacklegs, *A History of British Trade Unionism* (Harmondsworth, 1963), p.110.

34. See Cronin, *Industrial Conflict*, ch.2 for a critique.

35. This is the technical problem of multicollinearity in econometric work.

36. Those which include the period before 1914 are D. Sapsford, 'The United Kingdom's Industrial Disputes (1893-1971); A Study in the Economics of Industrial Unrest (unpublished Univ. of Leicester M. Phil. Thesis, 1973); D. Sapsford, 'A Time Series Analysis of the United Kingdom's Industrial Disputes', *Industrial Relations*, 14 (2), 1975, pp.242-9; Bean and Peel, 'Business Activity'; Ragin, Coverman and Hayward, 'Labour Disputes'; Cronin, *Industrial Conflict*.

37. Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel, *Strikes*, p.1.

38. M. Jones, 'The Llechwedd Dispute, Blaenau Ffestiniog', *Llafur*, 1 (4), 1975, p.6
39. Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel, *Strikes*; M. Gutman, 'Primary (Informal) Work Groups', *Radical America*, 6 (3), 1972, pp.78-88; Price, *Masters*; N. Nicholson and J. Kelly, 'The Psychology of Strikes', *Journal of Occupational Behaviour*, 1 (4), 1980, pp. 275-84.
40. J. Hills, W. Ashley and M. Woods, *Industrial Unrest: A Practical Solution* (London, 1914), p.39
41. *Strikes and Lockouts for 1913*, PP 1914-16, p.xvi.
42. P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The culture of the factory in later Victorian England* (London, 1982), ch.2.
43. There was significant tension between union officials and rank and file workers from the late 1870s; Burgess, *Origins*, pp.264-93.
44. Conflict sharpened as competition increased at the end of the 1870s. In 1877 and 1878 there were partial textile strikes in Bolton and Oldham (the latter unofficial) and in late 1878 a more general nine week stoppage affecting some 70,000 which led to riots after which 68 were tried and convicted. In 1884 some 18,000 weavers were on strike for 8 weeks, in 1885 25,000 spinners and weavers in Oldham were involved in a three month dispute and then in 1892-3 500,000 struck for 20 weeks in the 'cotton war'. If the claim that in Oldham alone between 1883-1893 spinners were involved in some 3,000 disputes in some 300 mills is correct the image of deference seems to pall a little. Joyce, *Work*, ch.2; Llewellyn Smith, 'Strikes', p. 1,030; Burgess, *Origins*, pp.266-71.
45. J. White, 'Cotton', in Wrigley (ed.), *Industrial Relations*, p.227 notes that between 1888-1892 9.2% of strikes in textiles ended with hands being replaced.
46. R. Bean, 'The Liverpool Dock Strike of 1890', *International Review of Social History*, xviii (1), 1973, p.63.
47. Knowles, *Strikes*, pp.219-20; Nicholson and Kelly, 'Psychology', p.281.
48. Llewellyn Smith, 'Strikes', pp.1,026-7.
49. *Strikes and Lockouts for 1895*, PP 1896, p.64. For discussions of unofficial action see Burgess, *Origins*; Price, *Masters*; V. Gore, 'Rank and File Dissent', in Wrigley (ed.), *Industrial Relations*, pp.47-73; K. Brooker, 'The Northamptonshire Shoemakers' Reaction to Industrialisation: some Thoughts', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, vi (3),

1980, pp.151-9.

50. Llewellyn Smith, 'Strikes', p.1,027; Jones, 'Llechwedd'.

51. Llewellyn Smith, 'Strikes', p.1,026; the *Reports on Strikes and Lockouts* for the 1890s contain information on strike pay in many strikes.

52. C. Pearce, *The Manningham Mills Strike, Bradford December 1890 - April 1891* (Hull, 1975), pp.59-67. This is one of the few studies of individual strikes that is sensitive to the issues raised here.

53. This happened in the Manningham Mills strike; Pearce, *Manningham*, pp.19, 50.

54. E. Jacques and C.H. Piret, 'La Saisie du Sens de l'Action: Questions/Problèmes de méthode a propos de l'Analyse', *Recherches Sociologiques*, 5 (1), 1974, pp.105-114; D. Geary, 'Identifying Militancy: the Assessment of Working Class Attitudes Towards State and Society', in R.J. Evans (ed.), *The German Working Class 1888 - 1933: the Politics of Everyday Life* (London, 1982).

55. W. McCarthy, 'The Reasons Given for Striking: an Analysis of Official Statistics, 1945-1957', *Bulletin of the Oxford University Institute of Statistics*, 21, 1959, pp.17-29; P.L. Robertson, 'Demarcation Disputes in British Shipbuilding before 1914', *International Review of Social History*, 20 (2), 1975, pp.220-35.

56. Bean, 'Liverpool', p.67.

57. R.O. Clarke, 'The Dispute in the British Engineering Industry 1897-1898: an Evaluation', *Economica*, n.s. xxiv (94), 1957, pp.128-37; N.Todd, 'Trade Unions and the Engineering Industry Dispute at Barrow-in-Furness, 1897-1898', *International Review of Social History*, 20 (1), 1975, pp.33-47; J. Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards Movement* (London, 1973).

58. Mann, *Consciousness*, p.13. My argument here has benefited from an interesting critique of Mann (though without accepting its conclusions); M.R. Smith, 'The Effects of Strikes on Workers: a Critical Analysis', *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 8 (4), 1978, pp.457-72.

59. Schooling, 'Strikes', pp.860-61; J.R. MacDonald, *The Socialist Movement* (London, 1912), p.50; P. Snowden, *Socialism or Syndicalism* (London, 1913), pp.33,222-3; *The Industrial Syndicalist*, 1 (7), January 1911, pp.20-33.

60. *The Industrial Syndicalist*, 1 (6), December 1910, p.10; J. Hinton, *Labour and Socialism: A History of the British Labour Movement 1867-1974*

(Brighton, 1983), p.69. The terms defensive/offensive are not used here in their restrictive nineteenth century sense of for/against new conditions.

61. Knowles, *Strikes*, p.151; on differences in strike proneness, see Cronin, *Industrial Conflict*, ch.7.

62. Compiled from *Abstract of Labour Statistics in the United Kingdom*, for 1904, 1909, 1913. These appear to contain the final revisions in a much revised series. Each year a small number of workers went on strike more than once. The only year in which this had a serious impact was 1912 in coal-mining when it affected some 106,000 workpeople.

63. Holton, *British Syndicalism*, pp.20, 76-77.

64. K. Forchheimer, 'Some International aspects of the strike Movement: the Results of Labour Disputes', *Bulletin of the Oxford University Institute of Statistics*, 10 (9) 1948, pp.294-304.

65. Holton, *British Syndicalism*, p.123.

66. E. Durkheim, *Suicide* (London, 1952). It should be stressed that Durkheim himself did not make this connection. S. Stack, 'The Effect of Strikes on Suicide: a National Analysis', *Sociological Focus*, 5 (2), 1982, pp.135-46.

67. O. Anderson, 'Did Suicide Increase with Industrialisation in Victorian England', *Past and Present*, 86, 1980, pp.149-73.

68. G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A study in the relationship of classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford, 1971), ch.17.

69. There is a long standing but limited sociological debate around the 'Kerr-Siegel hypothesis' which attempts to link strikes to community character. For a historical critique see Cronin, *Industrial Conflict*, ch.7. L. Hollern Lees, 'Strikes and the Urban Hierarchy in Early Industrial Towns, 1842-1901', in J.E. Cronin and J. Schneer (eds.), *Social Conflict and the Political Order in Modern Britain* (London, 1982) also attempts to make some links but within a framework which stresses the institutionalisation of industrial relations.

70. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*, ch.19; M. Blanch, 'Nation, Empire and the Birmingham Working Class, 1899-1914' (Unpublished Univ. of Birmingham Ph.D. Thesis, 1975), p.336.

71. J. McHugh, 'The Belfast Labour Dispute and the Riots of 1907', *International Review of Social History*, 27 (1), 1977; Holton, *British Syndicalism*, ch.6, 14.

72. Pearce, 'Manningham', pp.36-49; see also K. Laybourn, 'The Manningham Mills Strike: Its Importance in Bradford History', *The Bradford*

Antiquary, xlvii, 1976, pp.7-35. For a similar though less intense polarisation in 1890 see H. Hendrick, 'The Leeds Gas Strike, 1890', *Thoresby Society Publications*, liv (2), 1974), pp.78-98.

73. N. Scotland, 'Rural War in Late Victorian Norfolk', *Norfolk Archives*, xxxvii (6), 1981, pp. 82-7; A. Howkins, 'Edwardian Liberalism and Industrial Unrest: a Class Analysis', *History Workshop*, 4, 1977, pp.143-62.

74. D. Smith, 'Tonypandy 1910: Definitions of Community', *Past and Present*, 87, 1980, pp.158-84; K. Brooker, *The Hull Strikes of 1911* (Hull, 1979); H. Hilkins, 'The Liverpool General Transport Strike of 1911', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 113, 1961, pp.169-95; Holton, *British Syndicalism*, ch.6; *Wolverhampton Express and Star*, Jan. - May 1913.

75. See C. Wrigley, 'The Government and Industrial Relations', and R. Davidson, 'Government Administration', in Wrigley (ed.), *Industrial Relations*, pp.135-86.

76. Ingham, *Strikes*, *passim*.

77. G. Askwith, *Industrial Problems and Disputes* (London, 1920), p.228; E. Wigham, *Strikes and the Government 1893-1981* (London, 1982), ch.1.

78. G. Marshall, 'The Armed Forces and Industrial Disputes in the United Kingdom', *Armed Forces and Society*, 5 (2), 1979, pp.271-3; R. Neville, 'The Yorkshire Miners and the 1893 Lockout: the "Featherstone Massacre"', *International Review of Social History*, 21 (3), 1976, pp.337-57.

79. McHugh, 'Belfast', pp.8-13; Smith, 'Tonypandy', pp.159-60; M. Daunton, 'Inter-Union Relations on the waterfront: Cardiff 1888-1914', *International Review of Social History*, 22 (3), 1977, pp.350-78; Hilkins, 'Liverpool'. Two battalions were put on alert in June 1911 after bitter battles with police in Hull; see Brooker, *Hull Strikes*, p.20; P. Addison, 'Winston Churchill and the Working Class, 1900-1914', in J. Winter (ed.), *The Working Class in Modern British History* (Cambridge, 1983).

80. McHugh, 'Belfast', p.15.

81. H. Collins, 'The Marxism of the Social Democratic Federation', in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.), *Essays in Labour History* (London, 1971) II, pp.47-69; W. Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900-1921* (London, 1969), p.29.

82. MacDonald, *Socialist*; Snowden, *Socialism*; *Labour Leader*, Oct. 2-23, 1913; R. Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism* (London, 1972), pp.32-8.

83. For examples of the significance of local SDF involvement in strikes in one area see Brooker, 'Northamptonshire Shoemakers'; K. Brooker, 'James Grimble and the Raunds Strike of 1905', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, vi (5), 1983, pp.275-9.

84. S. Yeo, 'A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain 1883-1896', *History Workshop*, 4, 1977, pp.5-56.

85. R. Tressell, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* (London, 1965), p.46; J. Young, 'Militancy, English Socialism and *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*' (mimeo, 1982).

86. Holton, *British Syndicalism*; Kendall, *Revolutionary Movement*; R. Challinor, *The Origins of British Bolshevism* (London, 1977); D. Morris, 'The Origins of the British Socialist Party', *North West Labour History Society Bulletin*, 8, 1982-3.

87. Hinton, *Labour and Socialism*, ch.4-5.

88. L. Hall, 'My Version of "Syndicalism"', *The Syndicalist*, May 1912, p.2; *Hansard*, March 19, 1912, p.1,774.

Chapter Five

LEISURE

Hugh Cunningham

I

The image of the years before 1914 as a golden age derives much of its impetus from the history of leisure. Particular forms of leisure, most notably music hall, cricket and the seaside holiday, are seen as enjoying in these years their golden age, and more generally the period, and particularly the Edwardian part of it, is conceived to have been more leisured, more easily-paced, than those which came before or after it.¹

In another perspective these years are seen as the beginning of the age of 'mass' leisure, when a new level of demand for leisure goods and services within the working class was matched, on the supply side, by major changes in technology, investment and organisation. The word 'mass', of course, often encapsulates a critical moral comment as well as a description of the marketing of leisure.²

These two perspectives, that of the golden age and of mass leisure, have their merits, but they need to be seen as the product of the peculiar historiography of leisure, and of the sources upon which it has been based. The mainstream historiography of leisure falls broadly into two categories; on the one hand histories of production and performance, and on the other histories of moral attitudes. The first category is constructed out of sources which celebrate the role of the star - W.G. Grace or Marie Lloyd³ - or of a genre, or which, looking at the leisure industries, demonstrate the accumulation of capital, the increase of seating capacity, the number of excursionists, and so on. The second category focuses on the abundance of concern about the morality of working class leisure, evident in Parliamentary Papers, newspapers, journals and

books; it directs our attention to drinking, prostitution, gambling, crowd behaviour, and Sunday observance. The emphasis of both categories is on what is public, observable and measurable - and correspondingly, to a large extent, on what is masculine. In our period the most accessible sources require particularly careful handling, for the increase in the quantity of printed material can itself give an impression of an increase in the quantity of and concern about leisure. There is an obvious danger in assuming that because we can count more football matches or whatever, then more were happening; there is a less obvious danger in assuming that things which were not reported and written about did not happen at all. We need to guard against the possibility that there are conclusions built into the nature of the evidence.

This chapter seeks to circumvent the problems inherent in the sources by first surveying the evidence for the emergence of mass leisure at a national or macro level, and then counterposing to this an examination of leisure opportunities and of the structure of leisure from below, from the perspective of the family life cycle, gender, community and region. Finally the changes which did occur will be placed in two contexts: on the one hand an ideological commentary about working class leisure which both inherited much from the past and sought to structure the new leisure within a larger concern about war, empire and democracy; and on the other a major expansion of the leisure class itself during this period.

II

The argument that this period saw the birth of mass leisure is most naturally sustained by citing aggregate evidence for the country as a whole - sometimes enlivened by suitable local examples. There can be no doubt that this type of evidence points at the very least to the conclusion that there was a widening of opportunities for leisure within the working class. It is most conveniently surveyed by examining, first, the demand for leisure, then the supply of leisure, and finally the outcome in a new social organisation of leisure.

The increase in demand for leisure, though it undoubtedly occurred, is perhaps most subject to qualification. Three factors need to be considered. First, to what extent was there an increase in the hours free from work on a daily, weekly and annual

basis? Secondly, to what extent was there an increase in real incomes to allow of a greater expenditure on leisure? And thirdly, insofar as there was an increase in time or money, how much of it was spent on leisure, rather than, say, on overtime or better food?

The period is given a certain unity by the fact that major reductions in daily and weekly hours of work occur immediately before and after it rather than during it. The early 1870s saw the widespread establishment of the nine-hour day. The struggle for an eight-hour day from the 1880s onwards was only very partially successful. Reductions in normal hours through the period were piecemeal and insubstantial, and may have been offset by increases in overtime and a decrease in leisure on the job.

'Sky-larking and horse-play', as Alfred Williams noted of a Swindon railway factory in 1915, 'are not nearly as common and frequent as they were formerly.'⁴ Moreover, if a 54-hour week was the norm established in the 1870s there were numerous and enduring exceptions to it. For agricultural labourers, for example, 'the hours of labour in the summer months are usually 11 or 12 per day, with intervals of 1½ to 2 hours for meals; in a few cases the working time on Saturdays is slightly reduced, but this is not general.'⁵ As to the notorious case of shop assistants, the long campaign to reduce hours was largely ineffective. The House of Lords Select Committee in 1901 confirmed that many assistants worked 80-90 hours per week, and the 1904 Shop Hours Act was permissive and ineffective. The only real advance was the achievement of a half-holiday in 1911 - though with some exceptions.⁶ In addition to these relatively well-documented cases, there were many other workers whose conditions and hours of work defy neat tabulation - seasonal, migratory and casual workers, dockers, workers in the sweated trades, domestic servants. For all such, and indeed for unemployed married women, a regular 54-hour working week with a Saturday half-holiday was at best a distant dream; it had absolutely no foundation in the reality of their lives.

There can be no doubt, however, that one regular period of time, the Saturday half-holiday, was becoming more widely available for leisure during this period. Not only was the Saturday half-holiday spreading at the expense of St. Monday; perhaps more significant, work was ending earlier on Saturdays. Thus for textile workers legislation laid down a Saturday half-holiday beginning at 2.00 p.m. in 1850,

reduced to 1.00 p.m. in 1874 and to noon in 1901. The majority of workers did not gain the Saturday half-holiday through legislation, but through trade union pressure, and demand grew in the 1890s to leave off work at noon. The engineering trades on the Tyne and Wear, for example, obtained a 'twelve o'clock' Saturday in 1890. The increasing universality of the Saturday half-holiday and its growing length undoubtedly gave an edge to the demand for leisure in this period, and had demonstrably important effects in, for example, the spread of organised sport. Once again, however, many workers, as noted above, failed to benefit from it.⁷

Besides the possibilities for leisure daily and weekly, this period also saw changes in the pattern of annual holidays - though once again they are not very major changes. As far as the law was concerned there was no advance on the 1875 Holidays Extension Act whose chief impact, of course, was to spread the institution of the first Monday in August as a holiday. August Bank Holiday was particularly important in southern England giving at least one break in a calendar from which holidays had largely been excluded. Elsewhere traditional holidays continued, whether in the form of the Lancashire Wakes Weeks or of more sporadic holidays for special events like the races in the rest of the north and midlands; the August Bank Holiday had less of an impact. The day trip remained by far the most common form of holiday, but in the Lancashire textile industry and to a lesser extent in the Yorkshire woollen industry up to a week on holiday had become a possibility by the turn of the century. It was, however, with rare exceptions, a week without pay. Only in 1911 did the trade union movement begin to press for holidays with pay for all workers, and the impact of the demand before 1914 was slight.⁸ The extension of holiday time suggests an increase in demand for leisure, but at the same time it must be recognised that some enforced holidays were in effect unemployment. In the Swindon railway factory many workmen were 'indifferent to holidays. Many hundreds of them would never have one at all if they were not forced to do so by the constitution of the calendar and the natural order of things.' More sharply still, workmen in Lancaster enjoying four weeks annual holiday without pay at Easter, Whitsun, August and Christmas, often described the experiences as 'lock-outs'. As John Walton has described, only in the Lancashire textile industry was the availability of holiday time matched by the

resources to enjoy it for a time-span longer than one or at most two to three days.⁹

Overall, then, the increase in the time available for leisure in this period was marginal, and subject to much qualification. What can be said about income? The general picture is of a rise in real wages of approximately one third in the last quarter of the century, followed by stagnation or decline in the period up to the First World War. Qualifications, of course, are necessary: unemployment, underemployment, occupational structures, regional and more localised variations, the level of means for supplementing income, for example through allotment produce, all contribute to a more complex and generally less blandly optimistic picture - as of course do the numerous investigations of poverty and of family budgets.¹⁰

None of these qualifications should obscure the fact that there was a substantial increase in working class spending power in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately there is no reliable means of calculating how much of it was spent on leisure. Food, clothing, and household goods and furniture had equal if not more pressing claims, and for some of these at least there is evidence of increased expenditure.¹¹ Such figures as there are (and they are often little better than guesses) do suggest an increase in total expenditure on leisure goods and services even in the period of stagnant real income in the early twentieth century, but part of that increase may be due to a disproportionate rise in expenditure on leisure among the leisure classes. Within the working class, as to an even greater extent within society as a whole, there was a significant decline in the proportion of income absorbed by alcohol, but even at the end of the period expenditure on alcohol dominated total expenditure on leisure goods and services, forming over half.¹²

In reality there was an infinite number of gradations in the extent to which working class people could participate in expenditure on leisure, but in the attempt to estimate overall demand it is probably fair to conclude that expenditure on leisure, apart from alcohol, was scarcely possible at all for one third of the working class; that about half were able to participate fairly fully, and the remainder intermittently and on no more than a daily basis. Of course these static figures take no account of the movements of the life cycle, but they do alert us to the fact that the increase of demand from within the working class was restricted

by a variety of factors, and that many of 'the masses' played no part in the mass market for leisure.

An increase in the supply of leisure, particularly commercial leisure, seems at first glance less open to doubt. The major expansion of the seaside holiday industry, the birth of the cinema, and the incursion of commercial modes of supply, particularly into football, all point to a major increase in the volume of supply together with a greater dependence on the market in the provision of it.¹³ The cinema perhaps provides the most dramatic evidence that this was the case. By 1914 there were between 3,500 and 4,500 cinemas in Great Britain, with an average of 22 picture theatres for every town with a population over 100,000. From its inception in 1896 this thoroughly commercialised industry had quickly brought the experience of film, on a regular basis, within the reach of every town dweller. Its impact could be sudden and dramatic. Middlesbrough, for example, which in 1907 had only two theatres and two music halls, by 1911 had ten music halls, all of them showing moving pictures - it was the chapter on recreation which required revision between the first and second editions of Lady Bell's *At the Works*.¹⁴ The impact of commercial leisure stretches beyond the more obvious leisure industries. Activities which previously had been pursued without a business structure now came within the ambit of the market. Most notoriously this was the case with sport, where both professionalism and limited liability spread, but it is also observable in the growing dominance of commercial entertainment and of business modes of management in the working men's clubs.¹⁵

Four qualifications, however, need to be made to the notion that commercial entertainment was the only force transforming the supply of leisure for the people, or that it operated in one direction only. The first is that in some sections of commercial supply there was contraction not expansion. The number of pubs, the key locale for so much working class leisure, declined, and correspondingly the number of persons per licence increased.

Stricter fire regulations and licensing policies led, too, to a reduction in the number of music halls. The new London County Council reduced the number of places licensed for music or music and dancing from 348 in 1889 to 189 in 1891, and of these 189 only 39 were music halls (the remainder included 34 public houses which may have approximated to music halls, but also 95 Town Halls

Table 5.1: On Licences in England and Wales, 1875-1915 16

	Number of on licences	Persons per licence
1875	109,346	223
1886	103,593	251
1896	101,903	285
1906	98,894	329
1915	86,626	416

and Assembly Rooms). There was a reduction, too, in the number of venues for horse racing. It is possible, of course, for a reduction in the number of outlets to be consonant with an overall increase in supply - the pubs, the music halls and the race courses which survived may have been bigger, and this is certainly likely. But at ground level what people were likely to be conscious of was a pub, music hall or race course closed down, or transformed in its function, from, say, music hall to cinema.¹⁷

The second qualification is linked to the first. Commercial and market forces were subject to a number of restrictions of which the most serious was licensing. The state had increasing powers to regulate the provision and content of leisure; it had no hesitation in acting to maintain public safety and to uphold public morals, and in both ways restrained the full development of market forces. Partly in response to this the market regulated itself, both by conforming to those norms which it shared with the state, and by controlling, in certain spheres, the pursuit of profit. This control over the pursuit of profit did not restrict the quantity of supply, but it points to the difficulty of separating out commercial and non-commercial sources of supply.¹⁸

The third qualification is that much of the increase in the supply of leisure in this period catered not for the working class or for the masses but for the wealthy or relatively wealthy. In central London, for example, according to Charles Booth, 'all places of amusement are very largely supported by the rich or by strangers visiting London.' Some of the most significant increases in supply in the period - in shooting, for example, or

in land-hungry golf, or tennis - were for the rich.¹⁹

Finally, and most important, non-commercial supply of leisure, though less spectacular than commercial, remained of crucial importance. The dividing line between the two, as we have seen, is less than clear cut. A seaside municipality building sea defences and promenades was clearly acting to enhance the commercial prosperity of the town.²⁰ In most towns, however, expenditure on leisure was a continuation of what had started in the mid nineteenth century. Libraries, parks, museums and baths became facilities which in this period any town of size recognised it ought to possess. Sometimes the initial outlay came from a philanthropist; Bristol was typical in acquiring a municipally owned library, museum and art gallery between 1895 and 1905, all of them through private benefactions. By 1913 Carnegie had made grants amounting to almost two million pounds to libraries in the United Kingdom, and this kind of private donation together with ratepayers' money meant that 60 percent of the population was within reach of a public library in 1914 compared to 23 percent in 1885. Despite their rules and regulations and sometimes forbidding appearance these libraries were used, and used mainly, by the working class.²¹

There remained the vast range of leisure activities for the working class supplied without thought of profit and without expectation that the rates or tax payer might provide financial support. Many of the suppliers of these services felt themselves to be living in difficult times, short of members and short of money. They were tempted either to become purist and inward-looking, accepting a minority and limited status, or to try to keep up membership by softening its obligations. These were the kind of dilemmas faced by temperance organisations, YMCAs, and so on. Their sense of distress, however, should not obscure the major role which such organisations played in the provision of leisure right up to 1914. In Rochdale, for example, the churches and chapels, with their annual Whit walks and outings, and their regular tea parties, bazaars, concerts, lectures, classes and debating societies probably provided the main structure for the leisure time of their members. Besides this continuity of provision there were new initiatives in this period of which by far the most prominent were the numerous and successful endeavours to provide organised leisure for young people, starting

with the Boys' Brigades in 1884, and growing to include the Lads' Brigades, the Girls' Friendly Society, and the Boy Scouts. It is true that finance for the uniform was often a problem, and there was a familiar difficulty in reaching below the better off among the working class, but as the memories of many working class people show, these institutions and others like them, for example Sunday Schools, at the very least rivalled the commercial and public suppliers of leisure in the period up to 1914.²² It was these voluntary organisations, too, which provided some of the new initiatives, necessarily for minorities, which helped to expand leisure opportunities during the period. The coop movement, YMCAs, the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Association, and the Clarion Clubs all had recreational offshoots, many of them bringing working class and lower middle class town dwellers together in a discovery or re-discovery of the countryside.²³

Outside the relatively narrow circles of their spiritual descendants these developments have attracted little attention. The focus of historians, as of commentators and photographers of the time, has been on the seaside resorts, the music hall and cinema, football and Bank Holidays. The development of these forms of leisure is often seen as marking the beginning of the age of mass leisure. Besides the evidence of growth in supply and demand there are three types of argument used to suggest that the coming together of supply and demand resulted in a new social organisation of leisure. The first is the amount and the structure of investment in the leisure industries. Research here has scarcely developed beyond the point of citing random figures: £650,650 as the capital value of the sixteen leading London music halls in 1892, and £776,200 for 36 provincial halls; £6 million estimated to represent the capital value in 1887 of the nation's 1,310 places of amusement (200 theatres, 950 concert halls, galleries, public halls and gardens, 160 music halls); £2 million in the Moss Empires music hall syndicate formed in 1900; over £11 million invested in cinema by 1914; £500,000 in the 1890s for Blackpool's Tower, Alhambra and Gigantic Wheel; £30 million invested in joint stock cycle companies by 1903.²⁴ It is not easy to see any obvious pattern in such figures. It is probable, though we have no means of knowing for certain, that the total capital investment in leisure industries was increasing during our period, but it is worth noting three points in qualification. First, there was substan-

tial investment before our period, in music halls, piers and hotels for example in the 1860s.²⁵ Second, investment in leisure is not a history of continuous and profitable expansion. There were many disasters, many setbacks, possibly a tendency for investment in entertainment to be counter-cyclical.²⁶ Third, it is a mistake to assume from the example of music hall that the tendency was always towards the concentration of ownership. Thus in cinema after 1910 the tendency was towards a greater number of smaller companies. There continued, too, a considerable amount of small-scale enterprise in popular entertainment aimed at a working class audience. As Booth put it, 'especially in poor neighbourhoods, the old-fashioned style of sing-song still continues in force.' In York, too, Rowntree found that 'Only about a dozen public-houses have music licenses, but there is music and singing in a great many others.'²⁷ Counting licences will not necessarily tell us what was actually happening. And that small-scale licence holder, the publican, remained crucial in the supply and organisation of recreation and entertainment - a key figure in the spread and organisation of football in the north east, of boxing, of outings, and of betting.²⁸ The notion that entertainment for the people was being provided by a handful of self-made millionaires, in the same way as Lipton was providing groceries or Boots medicines, bears at best an approximation to the truth.

The second type of argument relates to the number of people employed in the entertainment industries. The census figures suggest that whilst the population rose on average 0.8 percent a year between 1871 and 1911, employment in the arts and entertainment increased by 4.7 percent a year. This evidence seems to point to a major increase in the supply of entertainment. It probably needs to be treated with much scepticism. The Registrar-General was all too aware of the difficulty of allocating people to particular jobs in this field, and of defining the entertainment industries; were 'musicians', for example, performers or teachers or a combination of both? Much of the work was part-time; of some 7,000 football professionals in 1914 only 2,500 were full-time. Much of it, too, provided employment for the working class, but not entertainment: there was, for example, a substantial increase in the number of gamekeepers from 12,633 in 1881 to 17,148 in 1911 and the figures under-record the extent of the increase.²⁹

The third and critical argument is that a

characteristic of the age was the growth of spectatorship and of consumption of leisure goods and services. It is figures for these which most plausibly lead historians to talk of an age of mass leisure. The growth of spectatorship was perhaps the most notable change. In horse racing it was not uncommon to find crowds of 10,000 to 15,000 rising at Bank Holiday events to 70,000 or 80,000. The average football cup tie attendance is reckoned to have risen from 6,000 in 1888-9 to 12,800 in 1895-6, to over 20,000 in the first round in 1903. Spectatorship was not confined to sports; 70,000 people, for example, watched the 1907 Crystal Palace Brass Band Championships. It is important not to fall into the trap of assuming that there were no spectators of anything before about 1870 - on the contrary cricket, prizefighting, horse racing, pedestrianism, and even events like Volunteer Field Days attracted spectators in tens of thousands in the earlier nineteenth century. Nor should we exaggerate the proportion of the masses who were mass spectators: football spectators probably accounted for no more than three or four percent of the population. What it does seem plausible to suggest, however, is greater regularity of spectatorship - weekly during the season, rather than sporadic - and it is in this respect that football is so important.³⁰

The growth and regularity of spectatorship was dependent on ease of travel, and the numbers travelling grew rapidly. The estimated annual number of visitors to Blackpool in season rose from one million in 1883 to two million in 1893 to four million in 1914. There was a regular large-scale exodus from the industrial towns, particularly in Lancashire; in Accrington half the population stayed away for a week in 1905. But travel as a form of leisure consumption was not confined to such towns; even in southern England agricultural workers, like George Sturt's Bettlesworth, might go on an annual day excursion.³¹

There was, too, increasing purchase of leisure goods, for example newspapers, bicycles and pianos. All of these, of course, found a substantial market within the middle classes, but there is significant evidence that they were within the reach of the better-off among the working class. Ehrlich, for example, calculates that by 1910 there were between two and four million pianos in Britain, one for every ten or twenty people, and concludes that 'even the lowest estimates imply that ownership was by no means confined to the middle classes.'³²

It is this kind of evidence, coupled with figures for levels of investment and the visible presence of leisure facilities in the shape of music halls, cinemas, piers, sports grounds, public libraries, temperance halls and so on, which point most obviously to a new age of mass leisure. Urbanisation, improvements in urban transport systems, the application of technology to the provision of leisure and an undoubted if modest and interrupted rise in the level of working class demand, add further plausibility to the idea. Our task now is to assess the impact of this new level of leisure provision on the lives of working people. It will be done at two levels, first by examining at an individual and family level the amount of leisure time which was taken and the ways in which it was spent, and secondly by looking at the context in which the new leisure became available.

III

The increase and reorganisation of the supply of leisure did not mean that leisure was, as it were, permanently on tap. On the contrary leisure time was heavily structured, moulded by three cycles. The first of these, as crucial in the study of leisure as in that of poverty, was the life cycle. Leisure expectations as well as the opportunities to fulfil them varied according to age.

In childhood time for play was universal, and yet what is remarkable about working class childhood leisure in these decades is the very limited degree to which it was affected by or came into contact with the leisure industries. All observers of working class children at play, and all autobiographical memories of childhood, stress both the traditionalism of children at play and their ability to fill time without resort to the purchase of the means of enjoyment. 'There were no bought pleasures' as Flora Thompson noted of her Oxfordshire childhood. Toys were in short supply. Dolls, hoops, marbles, and tops were in most cases the limit of equipment specifically designed for play. 'Indoors', as Mrs Pember Reeves noted in south London, 'there are no amusements. There are no books and no games, nor any place to play the games should they exist.' The street was the playground for both boys and girls, boys running around, playing at soldiers, perhaps more adventurously creating a tramcar or an ambulance out of an old box on wheels. Girls, typically, played hopscotch or skipped.³³

Some variety was introduced into children's leisure in three forms. First itinerant entertainers, losing their markets among adults, increasingly performed for the young. The punch and judy men, and the penny freak shows, still lining Shoreditch High Street at the end of the century, scraped a living from the halfpennies and pennies of the children of the poor. Secondly, of course, children might participate in family outings to the seaside or more locally - though sometimes with less than happy memories. And thirdly, and probably most important of all, the churches and chapels and Sunday Schools provided an annual structure to children's leisure, with their tea parties and outings as a reward for attendance. The famous Whit Walks, the parades of the Sunday School scholars, provided a focal point in the year, the preparations for it taking many weeks. By the early twentieth century summer could be one treat after another, comprising for one twelve year old daughter of a country labourer two Sunday School treats, one circus, one fair, one co-operative tea and two picnics.³⁴ Of these three forms of leisure only the second, which was not specifically for children, was dependent on any innovations in the supply of leisure. Right at the end of the period, it is true, children began to be able to take advantage of the cinema, but the extent to which they were able to do so was probably exaggerated; as Pember Reeves put it, 'Boys and girls who earn money probably spend some of it on picture palaces; but the dependent children of parents in steady work at a low wage are not able to visit these fascinating places - much as they would like to.'³⁵

The 'boys and girls who earn money' had entered a second stage in the life cycle when the opportunities for spending money on leisure were increasing at the same rate as the concern of the authorities about the manner of its spending. It is all too easy to exaggerate the opportunities. Many young people - girls, for example, sent away to domestic service - had little leisure time, and the money they earned was sent back to the family home. In rural areas, particularly in winter, leisure for the young was characterised by boredom. In the East Riding, reported Rowntree and Kendall, 'there is nothing in the way of amusement for the young people.'³⁶ In the larger urban centres, however, it becomes plausible to talk of a 'youth culture' in which there were recognised styles of dress, activities and meeting places for young people. To contemporary

commentators the latter seemed to be making the transition to adulthood too quickly; their means were inadequate to the time at their disposal and to the offerings of the leisure industries, and they resorted, or so the crime figures suggested, to gambling, trespass, loitering, dangerous play, malicious mischief and wilful damage - and were arrested, sometimes in groups, for so doing. These crime figures probably do not reflect a real increase in juvenile crime, and oral, autobiographical and diary evidence suggests that the leisure of such young people was marked by sexual restraint, and by frequent attendance at football matches, theatres, music halls and cinemas. It was they above all who benefited from innovations in the supply of leisure before the First World War.³⁷

Marriage, and more particularly the appearance of children, marked a new phase in the life cycle in which the opportunities for leisure, especially for women, sharply contracted. In the numerous and earnestly detailed budgets of poor families there is no margin for entertainment. A married man with a family on under thirty shillings a week 'must never smoke, he must never take a glass of ale; he must walk to and from his work in all weathers; he must have no recreations but the continual mending of his children's boots; he must neither read nor go to picture palaces nor take holidays, if he is to do all that social reformers expect of him when they theoretically parcel out his tiny income.' Needless to say these counsels of perfection were not adhered to. Typically men kept back a proportion of their wage for themselves, and although some of it might be spent on fares or clothing, the bulk of it probably went on alcohol. For women, but also for men, marriage meant that life became more home-centred, as did any leisure that it offered. 'The pleasures of a married man among the poor,' wrote Miss Loane, 'are chiefly connected with his children. When they are too old to interest him much - fortunately they are never too young! - he falls back on papering, painting, gardening, carpentry, joinery, and wood-carving.' Such a pattern of life was hardly typical - the usual complaint was that married men spent too little time with their families - but it suggests the remoteness of the world of the leisure industries to many of the 'masses'. For many married men the allotment absorbed more hours than the music hall, or even the pub. For married women life centred on the home. As a consequence, as Lady Bell put it, wives 'have no definite intervals of

leisure.' 'At first sight', agreed Miss Loane, 'one is inclined to say that there are no pleasures for poor married women independently of their children', and those she could think of on second thoughts were talking to the neighbours, reading, and attending 'that much ridiculed institution Mothers' Meetings.'³⁸

The pattern of the life cycle suggests that greater opportunities for leisure should have occurred as the children grew up and became wage-earners. The opportunities may theoretically have been there, but there is little evidence that they were taken. Habits had been formed, patterns of behaviour by then established, which were not easily broken. The leisure industries were for the young; the middle aged typically disapproved of innovations to the leisure patterns of their youth, and fell back on the offerings of the pub, enlivened by the occasional excursion. As for the old, their pleasures, as Miss Loane put it, 'are scarce, although they need them more than the young and enjoy them quite as much.'³⁹

The life cycle was one way in which leisure time was structured. Equally important was an annual cycle. We have seen already how it gave a time structure to the lives of children, but it was also vital in the lives of adults; indeed as holiday periods became better recognised they exercised a greater influence on the family sense of time and on the family economy. The year was broken into segments, the dividing points being Christmas or New Year, Easter and/or Whitsun, and holiday time, either the August Bank Holiday or the Wakes Week or equivalent break. Time was measured by these events and the family economy geared towards saving in anticipation of them or extra work to make up for time lost and debts incurred. Undoubtedly the most important event was the summer holiday, the longest break from work and the most expensive, for it involved not simply time lost, expenditure on travel, and for the fortunate a guest house, but also new clothing. There can be no doubt that one of the major changes in the pattern of leisure in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the increasing formalisation of this annual structuring of time, and in particular the degree to which, spreading from Lancashire, it gave rise to the expectation of a summer holiday. It became the central point of the year, the event by which other occasions were measured.⁴⁰

The third cycle which structured people's time

was a weekly one. As with the annual cycle it takes on in this period a universality previously lacking. By and large Monday ceased to be a holiday - though as a workday it was, as it continued to be, a day noted for absenteeism and low productivity. Pay day - Friday or Saturday - had always been the point around which the week and the family economy revolved, but now it was much less associated with that frantic, sometimes all night work, which had characterised the domestic worker in the early period of industrialisation. Work was more evenly paced, heading towards the pay packet and the Saturday half-holiday, with the Saturday afternoon the time devoted to playing or watching sport. This weekly structure for those in regular paid employment was paralleled in the home by a cycle which started with washday on Monday, and worked towards its climactic of cleaning on Fridays. These two work cycles, paid and unpaid, might be consummated in the pub on Saturday evening, leaving Sunday as a day of some anti-climax. 'Sunday', wrote Alfred Williams, 'is the day of complete inactivity with most of the workmen, and it is possible the weakest and the least enjoyed of all. If the weather is dull and wet a great number stay in bed till dinner-time, and sometimes they remain there all day and night, till Monday morning comes.' There were of course more active Sundays than this - the Sunday dinner a focal point, for some of course church, chapel and Sunday School, perhaps a visit to or from relatives, the possibility of an excursion or even the cinema - but perhaps the chief characteristic of Sunday was that it was a day of recuperation, and one therefore which brought the working class into contact with the providers of mass leisure in one major form only - the Sunday paper.⁴¹

These three cycles structuring the time of the working class point to two rather different conclusions. In the first place mass leisure impinged on working class life relatively rarely, and much more at certain points in the life, year or week than at others. Secondly, however, it was the prospect or the memory of leisure which gave shape to those lives, years and weeks. One could of course put this the other way around: the work gave shape to the leisure, but in fact, as people experienced it and expressed it, the moments of leisure structured time. On a daily basis the clock or the factory hooter might dominate people's lives, but beyond that time was measured by the opportunities for leisure.

This study of the structuring of time must be qualified in two ways. The first qualification has already been made implicitly, but needs to be made explicit. In each of these cycles there was likely to be a markedly different experience for men and women, with women enduring greater constraints on their opportunities for leisure at almost all points in every cycle - the one possible exception being the relative freedom enjoyed by young unmarried women in full-time employment. For married women who were not in employment - the majority - the Saturday half-holiday was meaningless, and for those who were employed it had to be devoted to housework. Women amongst the poor, wrote Miss Loane, 'generally abjured, from the very day of their marriage, all pleasures but those of a strictly domestic nature' (though there were some signs of change amongst younger married women). If family budgets allow something for the 'luxuries' of the man, they make none at all for the woman. As Preston women put it, 'It was all bed and work.' Mass leisure impinged on the lives of most working class women only very intermittently, and in some of its most celebrated forms - for example, football and indeed almost all sport - it had the effect of increasing the distinctness of the experience of men and women.⁴²

The second qualification is not easy to quantify, but important nonetheless. Cutting across the three cycles was a fourth one, the trade cycle. In individual lives, and in particular years, it could play havoc with any notion of a known, knowable and secure pattern of leisure. Not only at a national level, but also in particular industries, upturns and downturns, short-time, lock-outs and strikes added an unwelcome element of uncertainty to the prospect of leisure. Historians of leisure have scarcely begun to assess the impact of these cycles in the availability of work, indeed they have generally completely ignored them. At a local level there is some evidence. The spread of the seaside holiday amongst Lancashire textile workers, John Walton argues, owed something to the relative rarity of lay-offs, and hence the greater possibility of regular saving. A depression in the cotton industry resulted, in Rochdale in 1909-11, in a smaller number of people leaving for a holiday at the sea-side. There may still have existed, too, an earlier pattern of response to the cycle of boom and trade, with more drunkenness in booms than in depressions.⁴³ This scattered evidence does not get us very far, but there is in general no reason to

expect that leisure was in any way protected from the known insecurities of working class life - insecurities which of course extended beyond the family and trade cycles to, for example, health. What it would be interesting to know is whether expenditure on leisure was the first casualty in any curtailment of the family budget.

The structuring of the time of the working class by leisure was paralleled by a structuring of space. Leisure began to replace work in giving shape to the boundaries and contours of the known world - the world, that is, which had been experienced rather than learned through geography books. The journey to and from work allowed of no deviation. One went and one came back, a route and a routine boringly familiar. Or, alternatively, work was in the home, involving no journey. Leisure, too, as a child, started in the home, but quickly expanded outwards, first to the street, then to the neighbourhood, to waste space, perhaps a park, or in summer, for boys, to a canal or river to swim in, often to a rival neighbourhood, involving a struggle for territorial space, then to the local theatres, music halls and cinemas, each with their different ethos. Eventually it would take in the local pubs and beerhouses, and the local 'parade' for courting. Punctuating this process would be excursions outside this familiar world to amenities which served the whole town - the zoo, perhaps, or the museum, or the annual fair - and further afield to the countryside, perhaps by bicycle, or to some historical site, or of course to the seaside.⁴⁴ How far one went, of course, depended on the starting point. In rural Oxfordshire St. Giles's Fair in Oxford might be the centre point of the year as well as the ultimate point in the known world. Starting in a city one could go further - but rarely very far. The mass market for leisure was a series of regional ones at least so far as holiday-making was concerned. In some respects London was becoming a national centre, the location for the supreme tournaments for brass bands as well as for football players. Apart from this, however, the known world was the region, and it was known not through work but through leisure.⁴⁵

Leisure structured space in two other ways. In the first place it was probably more important than the geography lesson in giving working class people an idea of the world beyond the region, and in particular beyond Britain. At the fairground, in the peepshow and later in the cinema people formed their images of the world they did not know.⁴⁶

In the second place, in leisure people learned the politics of space. Private space was quite easily recognisable, fenced by notices threatening to prosecute trespassers. The politics of public space were more complex, for public spaces were controlled by regulations which might or might not be enforced. Sometimes, but not always, the police turned a blind eye to boys swimming in the rivers and canals. In the street, the key playground for working class children, they were in this period harsh in their response to football and to games of chance which might have in them an element of gambling. More formal areas of public space, like parks, were, as one commentator put it, 'very well for sedate and elderly people. They are useful to foster-mothers, slave girls hugging babies about, and a boon for nurses with perambulators. But what of Tom, Dick and Harry, who have just commenced work; what of them?' For them the park, regulated by bye-laws and closing at a respectable hour, presented a mode of life quite alien to that they had learned in the street.⁴⁷ Even common land, increasingly protected by law and given the royal seal of approval when the Queen opened Epping Forest to the public in 1882, was controlled by restrictions and increasingly invaded by a new and unwelcome type of user, the golfer. In the countryside itself the working class rambler was quickly at odds with the upper class shooter, and the first rumblings can be heard of the struggles which were to reach a crescendo in the inter-war period. Space was fundamental to the enjoyment of leisure, and working class people could not be unaware of the disadvantages in which they were placed in respect to access and use. One of the attractions of the pub was still, as in the first half of the century, that it was open and accessible, making no stipulations as to dress or respectability.⁴⁸

Besides the pub, one of the most important but rarely noted spaces for leisure was the home and its surroundings. One of the paradoxes of the age of mass leisure was that it was accompanied by an increase in the amount of family, individual and face-to-face community leisure. As Miss Loane put it:

My acquaintances among the poor, and they are numerous, ... seldom enter theatre, dancing saloon, music hall, or concert room; they seem to have little or no connection with the vast crowds hanging round football and cricket matches, or on the outskirts of racecourses;

they are not often to be found listening to improving lectures, nor attending political meetings, nor crowding into police-courts, and except very early and very late in life, they are not even regular attendants at church or chapel. Such enjoyments as they have seem to me to be of an entirely domestic nature; if not 'sacred' they are at least 'home-felt delights', and most of them can be savoured in solitude, or at any rate in solitude *à deux*.

Family-based leisure, centred in the home, so often depicted as a consequence of radio and television, can be seen in more than embryo in our period. It owed much to the increasing comfort of working class homes. It took many forms; do-it-yourself activity, playing with children, music, talking, even 'doing absolutely nothing', 'a pleasure which is almost entirely a lost art among the upper classes.' Certainly home-based leisure, as an ideal and an actuality, was not confined to the middle classes; the problem is that the sources do not often draw our attention to it.⁴⁹

Outside the home participant competitiveness was a leading feature of much working class leisure in this period: individuals competed against individuals, pubs against pubs, clubs against clubs. The same pattern of competitiveness can be seen in billiards, bowls, boxing, brass bands, choral societies, fishing, horticulture, pigeon fancying and racing, rabbit coursing, rifle shooting, and whippet racing. The rewards were sometimes material, beef or beer or a clock, sometimes a silver cup or plate, chiefly perhaps the honour and self or group satisfaction of winning. At its roots this competitiveness was local - intra - or inter-community - but it increasingly in our period reached up to the regional and then the national level.⁵⁰ How can we explain this participant competitiveness? There is no reason to look beyond the obvious explanation that in leisure, much more than in work, individuals and groups could gain some sense of achievement and control - for these competitions were for the most part organised by and for the working class.

IV

These types of activity receive relatively little attention in the middle class commentaries which are the source for so much of the history of leisure. They existed, indeed, in happy isolation from that

commentary. Yet that commentary, that ideology, formed a context within which much working class leisure was carried on, and could affect by its propaganda and sometimes by resulting legislation the forms and structures of that leisure. Four different components of that ideology may be isolated, two of them essentially inherited from the past, two of them coming to the fore in our period.

The chief inheritance from the past was a concern about the morality of working class leisure. This concern had become institutionalised in the early and mid nineteenth century in temperance, Sabbatarian, animal welfare, and youth organisations. The concern varied from an emphasis on the reformation or conversion of the individual to a policy of establishing legislative constraints on the behaviour of the working class. These one-issue campaigns often operated in isolation from, and sometimes in disagreement with, each other but they had in common a desire to modify by persuasion or by the force of law types of behaviour within the working class which were not consonant with respectable norms. Of course they had, and made much of, any working class adherents, but essentially they were movements of one class acting as it was persuaded in the interests of another. These types of activity all continued, and neither their methods nor their language shifted to any great degree. They sometimes saw themselves as, and sometimes were, in decline (both Sabbatarians and temperance workers, for example, felt that the spirit of the times was against them), but equally they were capable of new initiatives and new directions.⁵¹ The most notable of these was the focus on gambling, coming to the fore from the 1870s. By the early twentieth century gambling had come to be seen as of equal status with drinking. The remedies suggested were familiar ones: the mobilisation of public opinion, a tightening-up of the law, but also the provision of counter-attractions. 'We want, indeed,' wrote Seebohm Rowntree, 'in every town people's palaces, where people can be thoroughly at home, and where they can spend a social evening pleasantly and rationally.' The extent of gambling was in fact almost certainly exaggerated, but the campaign against it was indicative of the fact that forms of working class leisure were still subject to attack on the basis of their immorality.⁵²

The second inheritance from the past was the belief that class divisions might be superseded or at least softened in leisure. This ideology was at

its height in the mid Victorian period, but a residual belief in it remained, and it was often at the forefront of a number of attempts to repatronise occasions which had once been thought irredeemable. In the countryside in particular this was a new era of gentry and lady patronage - of Whitsun, of fairs, of maypole dancing. There was perhaps a shift of emphasis from class conciliation between adults (when, as with working men's clubs, patronage and the message it carried might be rejected) to a more authoritarian relationship in which the class of the patron was reinforced by age: the events patronised were increasingly for children who were neither likely nor in a position to reject what was offered - often food.⁵³ Beyond this small-scale institutionalisation of the belief in class conciliation through leisure there remained broader hopes that sport might be a new location for the meeting of the classes.⁵⁴

It was the commercialism creeping into sport that formed the focus for the third component in the middle class ideology of leisure. It would be quite wrong to suggest that there was any middle class unanimity on the issues that surrounded professionalism - any more than there was on temperance - but there can be no doubt that it became the centre of commentary and concern, forming by and large a hostile context for the development of working class sport, and hence exacerbating class relationships. From the middle class perspective the distinction between leisure and business, or more precisely between sport and business, was becoming muddled, and it left them unhappy. In the working class perspective there was no tradition of unbusinesslike sport, and hence no real problem or issue. Undoubtedly, however, the middle class ethos left its imprint, most obviously on cricket, but also on football.⁵⁵

It was sport, too, which was at the centre of the final component in the middle class ideological spectrum: the concern at the relationship between leisure, empire and war. This became of significance during and after the Boer War, and by 1905 had become a '"hackneyed" subject'. The issue was a simple one: did sport prepare people for an imperial and military role, or was it a distraction from it? Was Price Collier right in claiming that '... the governing races of today are races of sportsmen', or did the truth lie with Kipling's gibes about flannelled fools and muddled oafs? These were the terms of the debate - and not, for example, whether

there ought to be *any* relationship between sport, empire and war. If sport was not preparing people for war, then it ought to be, or it ought to be abandoned in favour of rifle shooting. This debate, like the one about professionalism, so permeated thinking about sport in the early twentieth century that it is difficult to imagine that anyone connected with sport, certainly any of the players, remained unaffected by it. The response of sportsmen in the early part of the First World War confirms that this was so.⁵⁶

The working class, then, went about their leisure, knowingly or unknowingly, within constraints which were largely set by the middle and upper classes. Sometimes, as with the restrictions on gambling, drinking and Sunday leisure, these constraints had the force of law - and might, indeed, meet with the approval of some of the working class. In other instances the pressures were of a different kind, inserting a moral or political content into activities which for the working class were of a simpler nature: for enjoyment, or as work, or an unproblematic combination of the two - as with fishing and gardening.⁵⁷

There was one further context within which working class people enjoyed their leisure: they did so in awareness of the fact that the dominant feature of the age was the expansion of leisure for the leisured. The leisure class, already in 1868, as Trollope noted, the largest and wealthiest ever known, expanded in size, in the range of its activities, and in the flamboyance of its pursuit of pleasure. The 'luxury' it engendered provoked hostility from labour spokesmen who either deplored its corrupting influence on the working class or hoped that 'the pomp and arrogance of wealth and luxury' might sow the seeds of its own downfall.⁵⁸

V

This socialist picture of the leisure history of the period may be set alongside the two we noted at the beginning: the golden age and mass leisure. They have this in common: they are all pictures constructed by people who observe, spectate and publicise but do not fully participate in the activities they describe. Some of them are nostalgic (the golden age), some critical (mass leisure and socialist theory), but all are produced from a position off-stage, on the bye-lines, or even further removed. They offer perspectives on the leisure of the age,

but each is an imaginative and to some extent imaginary construction of reality.

From yet another perspective, that of working class experience, none of these constructions bears much weight. No golden age could be apparent to those whose lives were cut across by the life and trade cycles. Mass leisure was not obvious to those who, if they participated in crowds, did so as members of a family or a community; nor did working class people feel themselves to be merely 'consumers' of leisure - they also produced it, particularly in that participatory competitiveness which we have stressed. Even the luxury of the rich could be observed with tolerance and without resentment.⁵⁹ For about one third of the working class, indeed, leisure had no meaning at all, except as something enjoyed by others. For the majority there was, in varying degrees and at varying stages in their lives, an increase in the ability to pay for leisure, more time for it, and an increase in the quantity of leisure activities on offer, whether through the market, or by state or voluntary agencies. But this growth in the opportunities for leisure was matched in working class experience by the structuring of leisure to the point where it took on the force of custom. The times for leisure, daily, weekly, annually and through the life cycle, became more fixed; the places for leisure - home, street, pub, the seaside, the public facility, places where you paid to spectate and places where you were encouraged to participate - acquired a fixed quality so that you knew what to expect and how to behave in each. Children, young people, men and women learned early on that they would enjoy different leisure experiences - and that males would enjoy more than females. Possibly leisure became not only more separated from work, but also more valued than work. Although the particular structure varied from one part of the country to another, and at different income levels within the working class, the crucial point is that in all areas and at all levels leisure acquired the quality of routine. It was subject, too, to common pressures. Arching over and linking together the separate histories of music hall, film, sport, the seaside holiday, the pub, and home leisure were pressures which became encapsulated in our understanding of the meaning of leisure: the expansion of market forces; the licensing role of the state; the pervading concern about the morality of leisure activities; the pressures of family obligation; the structuring of leisure by work; the

captivating example of the leisure class. None of this was entirely new. The moulding of leisure in the way we have described had its origins in the preceding age, and it survives into the present. What was distinctive about the period 1875-1914 was that during it the structuring of leisure acquired the force of custom.

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44. See above n.33 and 34 and Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum* (Manchester, 1971), pp.121-4 and *A Ragged Schooling*, pp.11-21.
45. S. Alexander, *St. Giles's Fair, 1830-1914* (History Workshop Pamphlet No. 2, Ruskin College, Oxford, 1970), pp.20-3; Walton 'Demand for Working-Class Seaside Holidays'; J.F. Russell and J.H. Elliot, *The Brass Band Movement* (London, 1936), p.176; Mason, *Association Football*, p.141.
46. Alexander, *St. Giles's Fair*, pp.47-58; Freeman, *Boy Life*, p.134; Low and Manvell, *British Film*, vol.I, pp.43-74; vol.II, p.145.
47. Samuel, *East End Underworld*, pp.38-9; Holmes, *London's Underworld*, pp.168-76; Gillis, 'Juvenile Delinquency'.
48. Hill, *Freedom to Roam*, pp.18-49; John Lowerson, 'Battles for the Countryside', in Frank Gloversmith (ed.), *Class, Culture and Social Change: A New View of the 1930s* (Brighton, 1980), pp.268-77; Lord Eversley, *Commons, Forests and Footpaths* (London, revised ed., 1910); Geoffrey Cousins, *Golf in Britain* (London, 1975), p.23; Anthony Delves, 'Popular Recreation and Social Conflict in Derby 1800-1850', in E. and S. Yeo (eds.), *Popular Culture*, pp.98-9.
49. Loane, *Englishman's Castle*, pp.32-60; M.J.

Daunton, 'Public Place and Private Space: The Victorian City and the Working-Class Household', in Derek Fraser and Anthony Sutcliffe (eds.), *The Pursuit of Urban History* (London, 1983), pp.212-33; James Walvin, *Leisure and Society 1830-1950* (London, 1978), pp.106-9; cf. Hugh McLeod, 'White Collar Values and the Role of Religion', in Geoffrey Crossick (ed.), *The Lower Middle Class in Britain 1870-1914* (London, 1977), p.71.

50. Metcalfe, 'Organized Sport'; Russell and Elliot, *Brass Band Movement*; Russell, 'Popular Musical Culture', pp.111-2; Redfern, 'Crewe', pp.127-32; Bernard Waites, 'Popular culture in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Lancashire', in The Open University, *The Historical Development of Popular Culture in Britain* (Milton Keynes, 1981), pp.98-101, 103-08; Shipley, 'Tom Causer', pp.40-53; James Mott, 'Miners, weavers and pigeon racing', in Michael Smith, Stanley Parker and Cyril Smith (eds.), *Leisure and Society in Britain* (London, 1973), pp.86-96; John Benson, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History* (Dublin, 1980), pp.156-7; Loane, *Next Street*, pp.137-8; Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*, pp.309-10.

51. John Wigley, *The Rise and Fall of The Victorian Sunday* (Manchester, 1980); A.E. Dingle, *The Campaign for Prohibition in Victorian England: The United Kingdom Alliance 1872-1895* (London, 1980); Yeo, *Religion and Voluntary Organisations*, pp.203-9; Brian Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom* (Oxford, 1982), esp. ch. 2 and 3; J.B. Brown, 'The Pig or the Sty: Drink and Poverty in late Victorian England', *International Review of Social History*, xviii(3), 1973, pp.394-5.

52. James Greenwood, *The Seven Curses of London* (London, n.d.), pp.377-419; Booth, *Life and Labour*, final volume, pp.56-9; Rowntree, *Betting and Gambling*, p.183.

53. Cunningham, *Leisure in Industrial Revolution*, pp.110-30; Alun Howkins, 'The Taming of Whitsun: the Changing Face of a Nineteenth-Century Rural Holiday', in E. and S. Yeo (eds.), *Popular Culture*, pp.187-208; C. Torr, *Small Talk at Wreylund* (Cambridge, 1918), p.58.

54. For the hope that the classes would come together in leisure, see Price Collier, *England and the English* (New York, 1909), pp.206, 248, 264-5, 331-2; Yeo, *Religion and Voluntary Organisations*, p.187; Russell, 'Popular musical culture', p.104. For evidence that in sport in particular there were pressures against class mixing, see Lowerson,

'Middle Class Sport'; Meller, *Leisure and City*, pp.226-36; Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, pp.124-46.

55. Mason, *Association Football*, pp.69-81; W.F. Mandle, 'The Professional Cricketer in England in the Nineteenth Century', *Labour History*, 23, 1972, pp.1-16; 'Games people played; cricket and football in England and Victoria in the late nineteenth century', *Historical Studies*, 15, 1973, pp. 511-35.

56. J.H.M. Abbott, *An Outlander in England* (London, 1905), pp.256-64; Collier, *England*, p.241; Mason, *Association Football*, pp.251-5; Vamplew, *Turf*, pp.62-73; Morrah, *Golden Age of Cricket*, p.249.

57. For the combination of work and pleasure see Roberts, 'Working-Class Standards of Living in Three Lancashire Towns', pp.55-8; Rowntree and Kendall, *How the Labourer Lives*, p.173. Gardening and fishing were to become two major leisure industries in the twentieth century, but very little is known about the extent to which working class people were able to participate in them before 1914; on gardening, see Stephen Constantine, 'Amateur Gardening and Popular Recreation in the 19th and 20th Centuries', *Journal of Social History*, 14, 1981, pp.387-406, and S. Martin Gaskell, 'Gardens for the Working Class: Victorian Practical Pleasure', *Victorian Studies*, 23, 1980, pp.479-501.

58. T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899; London, 1925); A. Trollope (ed.), *British Sports and Pastimes* (London, 1868), p.18; MacDonald, 'Gambling and Citizenship', pp.117-34; Standish Meacham, *A Life Apart: The English Working Class 1890-1914* (London, 1977), p.218.

59. M. Loane, *From Their Point of View* (London, 1908), p.64.

Chapter Six

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

David Woods

I

When the Criminal and Judicial Statistics for England and Wales were reorganised in 1893 the Criminal Registrar took the opportunity to review criminal trends over the previous twenty years. He noted that indictable crimes of violence against the person had 'diminished to a marked degree' and that the same tendency to diminution was observable in terms of summary trials of violence, where the average number had dropped from 402 trials per 10,000 people in 1874-8 to 268 per 10,000 people in 1889-93.¹ In his Report for 1896 the Registrar noted particularly 'the fairly steady decline in assault proceedings' and that in 1894 the total number of common assaults had fallen below 60,000 for the first time since proper statistics had been kept in 1857.² By 1899 the Registrar was convinced that there had been 'a considerable decline absolutely and a still greater decline in proportion to population.' Although he admitted that the 'unknown element' was large he thought that 'on the whole the facts seemed to indicate a great change in manners: the substitution of words without blows for blows with or without words; an approximation in the manners of different classes, a decline in the spirit of lawlessness.'³ The Report for 1908 returned to the same theme, with the Registrar noting over a period of fifty years an 'enormous diminution of assaults ... a gratifying improvement reflecting the general amelioration of manners.'⁴

Most contemporary observers agreed with these conclusions. In papers presented to the Royal Statistical Society, Leoni Levi and George Grosvenor referred to the overall decline in crime and in crimes of violence against the person in the last

decades of the nineteenth century.⁵ A.C. Hall went so far as to argue in his book, *Crime and its Relation to Social Progress*, that the old and most serious kinds of crime showed a greater and more continuous diminution in England than in any other great nation and R.F. Quinton referred to the improvements that had taken place as 'both gratifying and remarkable.'⁶

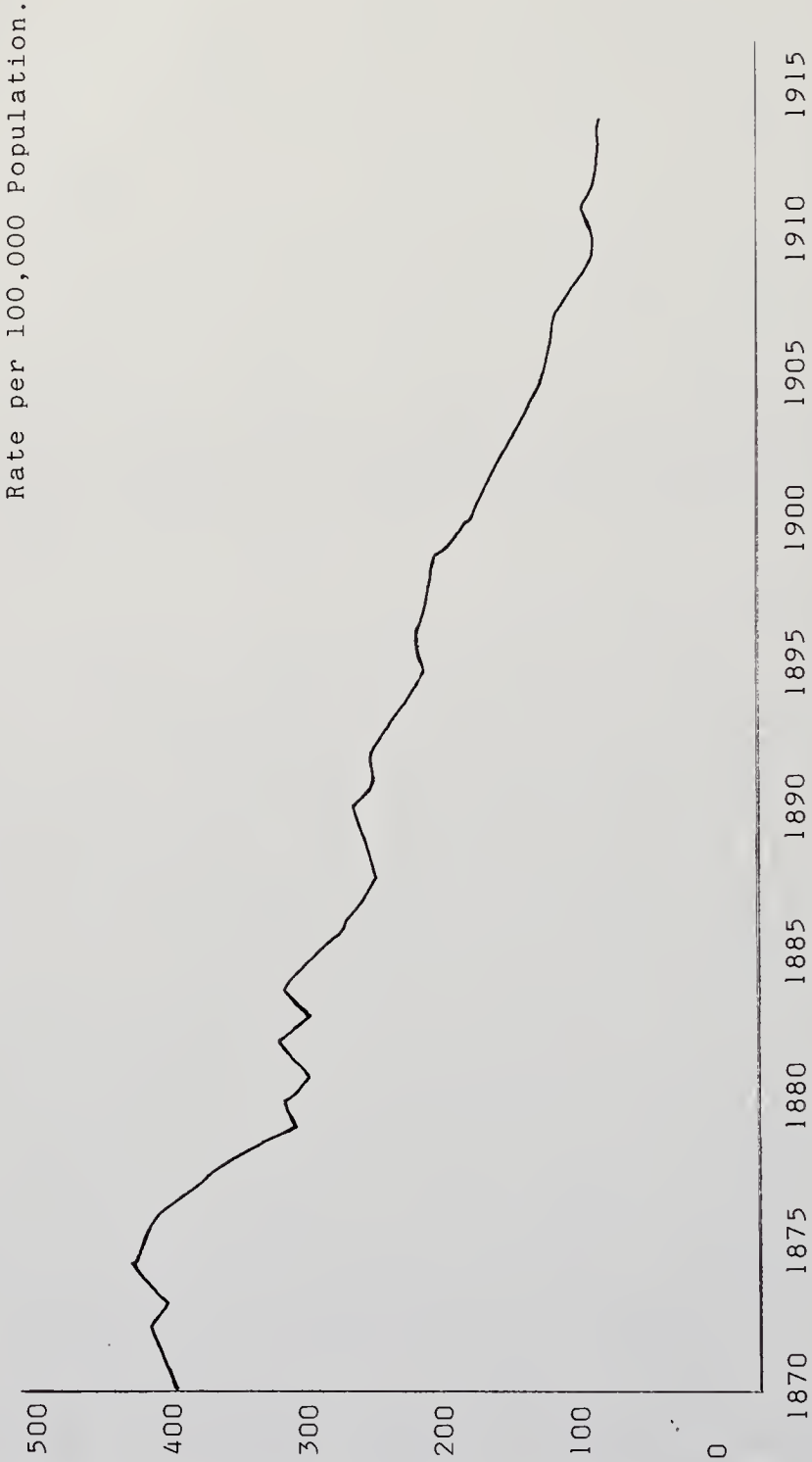
Modern historians of crime have generally agreed that there was a long-term decline of criminal activity in the second half of the nineteenth century. As far as the incidence of community violence is concerned, Gatrell and Hadden point to a sustained decline from the 1860s onwards and to the emergence by 1890 of what may be called a policed society.⁷ In a recent study Gatrell has highlighted the record decline in all crimes of violence against the person observing that, when adjusted to population, the criminal statistics demonstrate that assaults against the police fell by 64 percent between the late 1850s and 1914, and that total assaults fell by 71 percent over the same period. As he points out, 'this is an extraordinary decline for a historian to contemplate from the vantage point of the late twentieth century.'⁸

It is the intention of this chapter to explore the nature and extent of community violence in the period c.1870-1914, during which there would appear to have been a real change in the social behaviour of the working class. The notion of community violence encompasses a wide range of criminal activity, but it is proposed here to examine in particular the indices concerning common assaults, assaults upon the police, and aggravated assaults on women and children.⁹ A study of community violence does present particular problems to the historian because of the absence of first hand evidence. Although there is a vast range of literary evidence - parliamentary papers, police reports, watch committee minutes, the observations of prison chaplains and governors, magistrates, lawyers, charity workers, clergymen and journalists - much of it is exclusively the experience of the middle class. These observers saw everything through the lens of middle class morality and respectability and through the interests of their own value system. Further, most of the evidence is essentially impressionistic rather than statistical and scientific. However because of their immediacy of reference, these sources can be of great value to the historian. On the other hand, a study based on criminal statistics

is also fraught with difficulties. J.J. Tobias states flatly that 'criminal statistics have little to tell us about crime and criminals in the nineteenth century', and he lists a whole series of objections to their use, such as changes in the law and the practice of the courts which make comparison pointless, the level of unrecorded crime or the 'dark figure', the variable use which judges and magistrates made of their powers, the effect of the new police force, and the problem of unreliable returns from some police districts.¹⁰ However, other studies contradict this view, most notably Gatrell and Hadden's work on the interpretation of criminal statistics in the nineteenth century. Although they accept that two deficiencies cannot be overcome; that the 'actual' extent of criminal behaviour can never be fully quantified, and that legal and police developments over a period of time must affect the consistency of the recorded incidence of criminal activity, they are convinced that the statistics can be used to plot long-term trends in the incidence of criminal activity.¹¹ In their examination of 'Crime in Nineteenth Century Wales', Jones and Bainbridge have further demonstrated the value of statistical evidence and they conclude that in the final analysis no study of nineteenth century crime can afford to ignore it.¹² Perhaps we may accept the comment of R.D. Storch in his review essay on urban crime that 'criminal statistics throw back a skewed picture, but just as what is reflected in a funhouse mirror is an accurate image - if the viewer controls for its propensity to distort the body - so too long-term series of criminal statistics hold out the hope of being interpreted.'¹³

For the study of community violence there are particular, long term series of criminal statistics. From 1857 the judicial and criminal statistics were published in an enlarged form and included information from police districts of the number of people committed to trial for indictable and summary offences. Common assaults, which were assaults involving no aggravating circumstances, had been classed as summary offences since 1828. The maximum penalty that could be imposed by the magistrates was two months imprisonment. In 1853 an act was approved 'for the better prevention and punishment of aggravated assaults on women and children' which provided that assaults on any female or any male child under fourteen occasioning actual bodily harm could be punished by summary conviction. The magistrates were given the power to imprison offenders

Figure 6.1: Assaults in England and Wales, 1870-1914



for up to six months with or without hard labour, or impose a fine not exceeding twenty pounds. Assaults on police officers were also usually tried summarily, the maximum penalty being six months imprisonment. All assaults which involved malicious and unlawful wounding and grievous bodily harm were tried on indictment. There are, therefore, three specific indices of assault and it is possible to construct a graph illustrating long-term and short-term trends in community violence.

For England and Wales the evidence does point to a real and steady decline in the incidence of all forms of assaults which, allowing for increases in population, were reduced by two thirds between 1870 and 1914. There were some short-term increases during this period, particularly in the mid 1870s, but after this date the trend is one of steady decline. However, a major problem underlying assault statistics in particular concerns the unknown element, or 'dark figure', which is probably very large especially in the statistical series of common assault and aggravated assaults on women and children. The Criminal Registrar admitted this in his Report of 1896: 'when it is remembered how little is required to constitute which is strictly speaking an assault in the eyes of the law, it will be recognised that only a small proportion of the acts so characterised ever come before a Court of Justice.'¹⁵ There is an inevitable gap between the real incidence of these assaults and the number of trials that are actually recorded. In communities where fighting and brawling were traditional ways of settling disputes, the courts were not likely to be used unless the assault was unprovoked or particularly brutal. The Stipendiary Justice of Salford recognised this in his evidence to the Select Committee on Intemperance in 1877. 'Generally speaking common assaults are the result of a complaint upon the part of the assaulted person, and very frequently brought forward without the intervention of the police at all, or the party comes out and finds the policeman where he is.'¹⁶ In cases of aggravated assaults on women and children it is very possible that the vast majority of cases never reached the trial stage. Even when wives brought a charge against their husbands they often withdrew it. The Leeds Stipendiary cited an example of being sent for at midnight to take the deposition of a woman supposedly dying of kicks and blows to her head. The woman recovered and the man was charged with an indictable offence. Yet the case did not commence

because the wife feared that her husband would get a substantial prison sentence.¹⁷ Frances Power Cobbe put it very well when she wrote that:

as a general rule it is said that wives will often tell their stories to the constables at the moment of her arrest, and can frequently be induced to attend in court the day or two after their injuries and while still smarting from their blows and kicks and 'cloggings', but if a week be allowed to elapse ... the wife is almost certain in the interval to have relented, or to have learned to dread the consequences of bearing testimony ...¹⁸

However, although common assaults and aggravated assaults on women and children are underestimated in the statistics, assaults on police officers provide accurate data because the crime in question, by definition, had to be committed in the presence of a police officer. The incidence of police assault can, therefore, be used as a measurement of one aspect of community violence and as a guide to the transition from disorderly to orderly societies. Even here though the figures may be distorted by changing patterns of policing at local level. If watch committees ordered the police to undertake new duties such as greater surveillance of public houses and beer houses, or crackdowns on public drunkenness and brawling in the streets, the more likely it was that conflict and friction would occur especially in overcrowded, slum districts where there was little liking for the police anyway.

Of course, all criminal statistics are affected by the fact that attitudes to certain offences change over time. Magistrates, police forces and watch committees might well be influenced by the demand from 'respectable' citizens for action to stamp out certain types of offences. At any given time at a community level there may have been a particular onslaught on brawling, rowdiness, and disorderly conduct which on a short-term basis would result in higher arrests and trials. However, we are concerned here with long-term trends in particular and it is a reasonable assumption that the real rate of assaults would maintain a consistent relationship with the unknown rate, and that changing local police practice would only have short-term effects. It is only by using national statistics as a guide and turning to local and regional case studies that confirmation of trends in the incidence

and patterns of violence can be established. A closer view is necessary in order to test out the suggested transition from 'rough' to 'respectable' communities in this period and to examine whether there was a real decline in 'the spirit of lawlessness'.

Certainly at mid century and beyond, violence was still a prominent feature of working class life in many towns. Engels had argued that with the extension of the proletariat crime had increased and that society was in a state of visible dissolution:

In this country social war is under headway, everyone stands for himself, and fights for himself against all comers ... it no longer occurs to anyone to come to a peaceful understanding with his fellow men; all differences are settled by threats, violence, or in a law court.¹⁹

There were particular problems of law and order in rapidly expanding industrial communities such as Merthyr Tydfil which had a notorious reputation for criminal violence. In the 1860s common assault was still the largest entry in the town's criminal records and assaults in general accounted for between a quarter and a third of all charges.²⁰ However, although many of these 'frontier' towns can be described as rough societies with plenty of fighting and casual violence, David Philips suggests that in the Black Country 'there was little to show that people feared for their lives, or felt themselves unable to use the roads at night.'²¹ In the large cities such as Manchester and Birmingham recent research has revealed that certainly until the end of the 1870s a high degree of casual violence was accepted as a normal part of life among large sections of the community with the courts becoming involved only when the 'norm' was exceeded. Charles de Motte argues that there was a large sub-culture of violence in Manchester with street muggings, street fights and pitched battles, unprovoked assaults, kicking and 'clogging', disorderly conduct and wife beating, very much everyday events.²² Similarly Barbara Weinberger demonstrates that in the poorest areas of Birmingham, drunken brawls, Saturday night disturbances, street battles, attacks on bailiffs, poor rate collectors and policemen, and domestic assaults were characteristic and indicative that violence was very much a way of life.²³ In London also, in the middle decades of the nineteenth

century, high rates of casual violence persisted. Henry Mayhew noted the tendency to violence amongst certain groups of workers such as the costermongers where 'everybody practises fighting, and the man with the largest and hardest muscle is spoken of in terms of the highest commendation. It is often said in admiration of such a man that he could muzzle half a dozen bobbies before breakfast.'²⁴ There were fears that the 'residuum' would swamp society in this period. 'London was seen as the Mecca of the dissolute, the lazy, the mendicant, the 'rough' and the spendthrift.'²⁵

By the early 1870s the government was sufficiently alarmed by reports of an 'epidemic of violence' in the country to set up an enquiry into the state of the law relating to brutal assaults. Questionnaires were sent out to judges, recorders, and magistrates and although the main thrust of the enquiry was concerned with whether the law was sufficiently stringent to deal with assaults many replies described the state of violence in local districts. In County Durham there was said to be a strong increase in the number of brutal assaults and community violence although this was blamed on 'the continual, rapid increase of population of a very rough character from all parts of the country, attracted by very high wages.'²⁶ In Derbyshire there had been an increase in violence since 1872, blamed on the fact that the bulk of the population was composed of colliers and nailers who were enjoying high wages. There had been an increase in Staffordshire also which was similarly attributed to the increase in wages leading to drunkenness and to shorter hours which increased time and opportunity for 'domestic and out-door brawling.' The Stipendiary of Swansea thought that 'there had been a great change in the temper of great numbers of the labouring classes which had increased the risk of quiet persons in public houses and roads and streets', and from Merthyr the Stipendiary reported that 'there are many assaults accompanied with great and brutal violence upon men, such as kicking and biting', which he believed should be tried indictably rather than summarily.²⁷ In Birmingham there were over 100 men in the borough gaol for committing acts of violence and the Recorder believed that this 'epidemic of brutality' could have been put down from the first if the punishment of flogging had been added to imprisonment. The Chairman of the Middlesex Quarter Sessions reported that there was a 'class of persons who habitually committed assaults

of brutal violence and who were prone to biting, kicking and wounding with dangerous weapons.'²⁸ The same reports of an increase in brutal assaults come from towns all over the country, from Wolverhampton, Newcastle, Wigan, Leeds and Liverpool in particular.

Generally, the Report gives the impression that community violence was on the increase in the early 1870s and this is borne out by the criminal statistics. Apart from deficiencies in the law, the contemporary explanation seems to be the good state of trade which in its turn had produced high wages leading to drunkenness and violence. The connection between drunkenness and violent crime was stressed repeatedly by contemporaries and further evidence was given to the Select Committee on Intemperance (1877). The Swansea Stipendiary Justice claimed that all violent assaults took place under the influence of drink and the Chief Constable at Durham blamed drunkenness for at least two thirds of them.²⁹ The Chief Constable of Staffordshire presented a paper to the Committee comparing the incidence of drunkenness with that of assault in the county between 1861 and 1876, demonstrating a positive correlation.³⁰ With regard to the national statistics, drunkenness offences slowly declined until the end of the 1860s, reached a peak in the mid 1870s, and overall decreased slowly after this although periods of good trade and high wages produced short-term increases. The figures for assaults also reached a peak in the mid 1870s and then declined until the end of the century and beyond indicating the importance of relating trends in drunkenness to those in community violence.³¹ Drink played a very important part in Victorian and Edwardian society and as Kitson-Clark comments, its results 'were patent in disgusting forms in most of the streets and market-places of Britain ... in the background there was always present the degradation, the cruelty, particularly to the sick and defenceless which resulted from drunkenness.'³² Most expenditure on beer and spirits came from the working classes and John Burnett estimates that an average working class household spent between fifteen and twenty pounds a year on drink and that many families spent a third or even half their income in this way.³³ Such consumption had a direct impact on the incidence of street fighting, common assault, attacks on the police, wife beating and cruelty to children. Over the period drink expenditure began to level out from a peak of over fifteen percent in 1876 to under nine percent by 1910, a change brought

about mainly by alternative lines of expenditure but also no doubt by temperance campaigning and stricter licensing legislation, which must have helped to reduce the incidence of community violence.³⁴

II

To test out more fully the nature and extent of community violence in this period it is proposed to examine in depth one particular area, the industrialised and urbanised region known as the Black Country, with reference to the incidence of common assault, police assault, and aggravated assaults on women and children; and compare it to the national picture where appropriate. This region covers the area of south Staffordshire and north east Worcestershire, some 100 square miles, containing within it the four major towns of Wolverhampton, Walsall, West Bromwich and Dudley, as well as numerous small townships. The Black Country's economy was centred on the iron and coal trades and its population was almost entirely working class.³⁵

In Wolverhampton and Walsall the general trend of common assault follows the national pattern. The peak years for this offence were the mid 1870s when the rate of proceedings exceeded ten trials per 1,000 population. By the 1890s this rate had been halved in Wolverhampton and reduced by 75 percent in Walsall. The trend over the period and the close correlation between drunkenness and assault can be illustrated by reference to the decennial averages.

An examination of the nature of common assault in this period reveals a great range and variety of cases; neighbourhood squabbles, disputes between husband and wife, arguments at work or in the public house, street fighting and rowdyism, and challenges to authority in the form of such figures as bailiffs, nuisance inspectors, and school attendance officers. Magistrates in the Black Country towns frequently expressed their determination to put down 'public brawling', 'ruffianism', and 'drunken rowdyism' which was said to be of common occurrence and to include both sexes. In 1875 the editor of the *Walsall Free Press* commented that

Birmingham and the Black Country have for several years past obtained an unenviable notoriety for brutal assaults ... nor can our town plead innocent of such cases. Almost every Saturday night scenes of the most disgraceful kind can be witnessed ... it is a well known

Table 6.1: Drunkenness and Common Assault Proceedings per 1,000 of the Population in Wolverhampton and Walsall, 1860s-1890s ³⁶

	Common Assault		Drunkenness	
	Wolverhampton	Walsall	Wolverhampton	Walsall
1860s	8.64	7.14	6.7	3.8
1870s	9.45	9.81	9.09	7.97
1880s	7.14	4.35	7.45	4.0
1890s	5.28	2.52	5.75	3.18

fact that no Saturday night passes without one or more cases being taken to hospital to have their wounds, injured in drunken rows, attended to ...³⁷

In one Saturday night disturbance in Kate's Hill, Dudley, a crowd of 300 gathered to watch a drunken brawl. 'The disturbance was so great and the shrieks and cries of murder so loud that the schoolmaster rang the school bell to alarm the police.'³⁸ Fighting seemed to be the most common way of settling disputes in these towns and one observer, who had been a curate in Walsall, remembered that 'open air fighting was normal in the town ... the good people, however, were as a rule content with raw fists and not much harm was done.' When he moved to London he was surprised at first never to see fighting in the streets ... 'Londoners were tough enough, it was merely a difference in social customs.'³⁹ Certainly, drunken fighting in the streets was common with magistrates complaining that crowds were treating these exhibitions as entertainment instead of doing all they could to put a stop to such proceedings. However Will Thorne, remembering his Birmingham youth in the 1870s, remarks that this drinking and fighting should not be magnified or misjudged. 'We were healthy, normal human beings, fond of fair play, we had little amusement and little opportunity to enjoy the better things of life. If these fights sometimes took place, it was no fault of ours, but rather of the system of society we lived under - a system that made us work long hours of brutalising toil for little money; a system that had no care as to the slums we slept in, the food we ate, or the education we received...'⁴⁰

Many common assault cases stemmed from neighbourhood disputes where the sheer frustration of trying to get a living in miserable, overcrowded conditions often meant that a chance word could set off a quarrel which ended in blows. Such disputes were of a common occurrence and took place without reference to the courts, but some caught the eye of a passing policeman or left the aggrieved party so indignant that the offence was reported and a complaint lodged. The Wolverhampton police court reporter commented that:

Neighbours, like their dogs and cats will fight and quarrel and they are never satisfied until they have aired their dirty linen in the Police Court ... it was often a hard matter to keep them from fighting even in court. They turn up the whites of their eyes and take deep sighs when the "naughty hussies" tell lies about one of the other, and wonder that they "baint ashamed to stand there and kiss the book" ... Sometimes they'll produce an apron full of brickbats, a broom stall, a poker, a frying pan, and a paper full of hair that had been pulled off the head in the struggle. Generally, there's about six of one and half a dozen of the other in these quarrels, and if the case is dismissed the complainant has to pay costs, and then another shindy follows.⁴¹

Some of these women were of a particularly fearsome disposition; there was Bridget Murphy of Cox's Yard, Walsall known as the 'Queen of Hell Fold', because of her disorderly conduct, who had seized another woman by the hair, striking and abusing her; and Caroline Piper of West Bromwich, 'a terror to her neighbours because of her violent and overbearing conduct'. She had quarrelled with a neighbour and picked up a brick and struck her with it causing a severe wound.⁴²

Neighbourhood quarrels and assaults were common amongst the London working class also. Octavia Hill, who managed a court in Marylebone, noted the endless opportunities of collision and the tension that built up in dirty, close quarters and Charles Booth recorded his impressions of tenement life with its constant disputes over common rights and duties and the ferocity of washing day disputes.⁴³ In her article on neighbourhood sharing in London, before the First World War Ellen Ross points out that women's neighbourhood relationships often generated

tension and anger and that public fights between women seem to have been a regular occurrence on the poorest streets.⁴⁴

Violence was also common in or around public houses and beer houses. Landlords, fearing to be prosecuted for 'permitting drunkenness', were attacked by those they refused to serve, and drunken quarrelling often occurred in these places with jugs, spittoons and pokers being used as handy weapons. Sometimes, these quarrels escalated into full scale conflict such as the case of the Felves and McNallys who had been drinking together on a Sunday afternoon in a Wolverhampton public house. The Felves brothers refused to buy the McNallys any more drinks and late that afternoon they were set upon by the whole McNally clan shouting 'kill all the Englishmen'. A crowd of some 60 people assembled and cinders, brick-ends and other missiles were thrown injuring the Felves brothers.⁴⁵ Most of these disputes were less dramatic than this, consisting of an exchange of blows after an argument and only coming to the notice of the police by accident or mischance.

Assaults committed in the work place, either between workers themselves or by masters on apprentices, constitute another type of common assault. Workers paid on piece work would take exception to some articles being rejected as sub standard; James Wilcox, a tinner of Hill Top, West Bromwich, assaulted the foreman for 'scratching' some of his work, and John Bucknall, a shingler, assaulted the over-looker after being accused of making inferior iron.⁴⁶ Apprentices were in a very difficult position with regard to any punishment their masters might inflict on them. Such punishment may well have been regarded as 'proper correction' rather than illegal assault. For this reason, assaults by masters were unlikely to come before the courts, and those that did were almost always dismissed; there was the Walsall lad who had been knocked about badly by his master, but it was counter-claimed that he was 'inattentive, impudent and violent and that slight correction was necessary.'⁴⁷ Girls in domestic service were equally at the mercy of their employers who regarded 'proper correction' as their right and duty. One girl had been beaten so badly by her mistress that there were severe weals on her arms and legs. The defendant contended that the girl had lied to her and gone out of the house without permission, but she was fined five shillings with costs.⁴⁸

The police court cases do demonstrate that sections of the working class in these Black Country communities were generally not well disposed to outside interference in their lives. Police, bailiffs, public health inspectors, School Board officials were all unwelcome visitors to the yards, courts and backstreets and were often met with hostile resistance. After the introduction of compulsory education, attendance officers were a particular target, at best being scorned and cursed and at worst physically attacked. One of the Dudley attendance officers offered his resignation in October, 1876 because

he found the work so rough, and he met with so much insult and abuse that he couldn't stand it. He had been threatened three times in one day and if he was to do his duty his life was in danger. One man had said he would do three months in Worcester (prison) for him, and another threatened to break his nose. In one district, a woman raised the whole neighbourhood against him.⁴⁹

When the children were in school, parents did not readily accept the rights of school teachers to discipline their children and some rushed to the school to take direct vengeance on those who had punished their offspring. Some waited for the teachers outside the schools, abusing, threatening and punching them. A member of the Walsall School Board urged a strict policy of prosecuting for assault in all such cases 'as it seemed to be the understanding of the parents of children in some localities that if a child was punished they would have their revenge.'⁵⁰ Bailiffs were the common enemy. Attempts to evict a family or carry out a distraint for rent often led to physical resistance which was the workers' way of fighting back. To use the courts would cost money and it was unlikely that the verdict would go in their favour. Other public officials were simply carrying out the policies of the borough councils but as front line representatives of that authority they faced the resentment of working class communities.

III

Like the incidence of common assault, the rate of assaults on police in England and Wales declined in this period, by some 60 percent between 1870 and

1914, allowing for population increase. However, in the 1870s there was an upsurge of assaults on the police, reflected both in national and local statistics, as R.D. Storch shows in his analysis of ten police districts. On the evidence of this survey 'no significant diminution takes place in this offence until 1876-1880.'⁵¹ In Birmingham, assaults on the police peaked in 1867-8 and 1872-4 and they remained at a generally higher level throughout the seventies than they had been in the previous decade. Further, these assaults were of a more violent nature and often took the form of mob attacks.⁵² In Manchester, there seems to be a trend to greater violence against the police between 1867 and 1876 with no permanent decline until 1883.⁵³ David Jones records that in London the trend was slightly different with a high plateau of offences until the mid 1860s and a lower one thereafter with peaks in 1872 and 1881. He cites a police report for 1872 which estimated that each metropolitan officer was injured once every two years.⁵⁴ In the Black Country the peaks of police assaults in Wolverhampton occurred between 1858 and 1862 and 1875 and 1879 including a record number of 107 assaults in 1878. It was not until the 1880s that the rate fell consistently below the 1858 level. In Walsall, the peaks are similar (1858-62, 1874-5) but there is a steady decline from 1876.⁵⁵

The *Report on Brutal Assaults* (1874) suggested that part of the problem was caused by the magistrates' courts which did not seem prepared in the sentencing to create an effective deterrent against police assault despite the fact that assaulting a policeman in the execution of his duty could be punished summarily by a twenty pound fine or six months imprisonment, which was a more severe sentence than could be imposed for common assault on a private citizen. The Chairman of the Middlesex Quarter Sessions, Sergeant Cox, reported that 'assaults on the police were so frequent, brutal and dangerous that they should not be dealt with by magistrates, but sent to Quarter Sessions. This would make intelligible to the disorderly a fact that they do not now recognise that the law looks upon an assault upon a policeman in the execution of his duties as a very much more grave offence than an ordinary assault.'⁵⁶ A plea for stricter sentencing had also been made some years before by J.H. Elliott who argued that:

the person of the humblest police officer ought

to be as safe as that of a judge or bishop, protected by unusual severity. No man should be allowed to resist him or raise a hand against him. The civilization of a country is low indeed, while such grievous cruelties inflicted on policemen, especially by street ruffians, are but slightly punished, regarded with apparent indifference by the public or as considered to be equitably compensated for in their wages.⁵⁷

Despite these views, an analysis of sentencing for police assault in Wolverhampton in 1878 demonstrates that magistrates were not pursuing a deterrent policy.

Table 6.2: Sentencing for Police Assault, Wolverhampton Borough, 1878 ⁵⁸

107 Cases, 101 Convictions (90 Males, 11 Females)

Above six months (indictable)	-	1
6 months	-	1
3 months	-	10
2 months	-	12
1 month	-	34
14 days	-	7
Fines	-	34
Other Punishments	-	2
		<u>101</u>

Police-community relationships in this period were largely determined by the fact that social class was the basis of police treatment of citizens. There were no complaints of oppression from the middle classes - rather that the police were inefficient in coping with the problems of urban crime and behaviour. The working class, however, were more likely to see the police 'as masters instead of servants', the upholders of a hierarchical social order which meant one law for the rich and another one for the poor. Most of the hostility directed against the police from within the working classes resulted from what was felt to be interference in neighbourhood and recreational life, such as drinking, gambling and prize fighting.⁵⁹ Surveillance of public houses and beer houses was particularly detested, and often

resulted in violent clashes and it is significant that the limitations on hours of drinking imposed by the Licensing Acts of 1872 and 1874 and enforced by local watch committees and police forces occur at the same time as a general increase in police assault cases.

A detailed analysis of police court proceedings in the Black Country reveals three basic reasons for police assault over and above the fact that the police were regarded as unwelcome intruders in some working class neighbourhoods: individual resistance to being arrested; attempts to protect and rescue members of the community being arrested; and assault as a result of 'unwarranted' police interference.

Resistance to arrest seems to have been the most common cause of police assault, the great majority of cases occurring when the person being arrested was drunk. It could be argued that many of the assaults were the result of a loss of control rather than a dislike of the police although it is likely the two went together. Many cases refer to prisoners 'struggling and kicking in a savage manner', or 'kicking and biting'. However, some were arrested for making a noise and 'refusing to go home' or 'move along' and here there was real resentment often leading to blows. There seems little doubt that certain characters were moved on and arrested because they were well known to the police as 'nuisances'. In any dispute and disturbance they were arrested first. John Stevens of Canal Street, Wolverhampton, with nineteen previous convictions, was arrested for being drunk and disorderly and resisted with great violence. Inspector Thomas described the prisoner as 'a very rough fellow who had threatened to stab a policeman and was a perfect terror to the neighbourhood ... the worst character in Wolverhampton.'⁶⁰

The tradition of rescuing a prisoner or preventing an arrest was still a feature of police-community relations in the Black Country as elsewhere. The idea of rescue had a certain legitimacy especially when it concerned close friends, or community loyalties.⁶¹ When Patrick Joyce was arrested after a Saturday night disturbance in Wolverhampton in 1874, the two policemen were 'followed by a large mob', among whom was Richard Joyce, brother of the arrested, who 'endeavoured to incite the mob to attack the constables and release his brother.' The mob did so, injuring the policemen, one having his leg severely fractured.⁶² Sometimes the entire neighbourhood became involved in a rescue,

especially in those areas where there was already a great deal of hostility towards the police. One Saturday night in February 1879, the West Bromwich police attempted to arrest a drunken man who had 'refused to go home and had used obscene language.' A crowd of 200 quickly gathered and forced the policemen to take refuge in a butcher's shop with their prisoner. 'While they were there the mob, which had been unruly all along, remained yelling and hurling stones into the shop.' When the police superintendent arrived and the drunken man was brought out, the mob charged forward felling the superintendent with a brick. Eventually, the prisoner was got to the police station, the mob following all the way. The editor of the *West Bromwich Weekly News* commented that 'the riot had been noticeable for one peculiarity - the police had borne the whole brunt of the savage mob and received no assistance from the inhabitants.'⁶³ In another incident in Wolverhampton in August 1884, wholesale community resistance greeted the attempt to arrest a woman for being drunk and disorderly on 'Irish Row', Willenhall Road. Bridget Regan was seen at 11.15 p.m. to be drunk and P.C. Purchase had

endeavoured to persuade her to go into her own home, but as soon as she got in she came out and renewed the disturbance. He put her in several times and on one occasion kept the door closed for five minutes. The prisoner then came out with a poker and struck him with it on the side. With the assistance of P.C. Thompson they tried to take her into custody, but this they could not do owing to the obstruction of some 1500 people who had by then collected. A number of men hustled and struck at the officers and finally dragged them into a house. They kept them there some time and it was 12.20 p.m. before the officers could get away with the prisoner in their custody. Both officers were maltreated by the mob and the language towards them was of the most gross and indecent character.⁶⁴

Certainly the Irish communities in general resented the presence and attention of the police. Charles Booth referred to one area in Limehouse, known as the Fenian Barracks, which 'had a very bad name with the police for violence, sending, we are told more police to hospital than any other block in London... and being Irish if one of their number is taken by

the police a rescue is attempted.'⁶⁵

The last category of police assaults concerned those who attacked the police as a result of 'unwarranted' interference in their lives. Prostitutes in particular felt that they were unduly harassed, as did vagrants and working class youths. Some assaults in this category resulted directly from resentment at being driven off the streets for little apparent reason except noise or disturbance, as in the case of one Dudley labourer who refused to 'move on' and hit the policeman in the course of the argument. He defended himself stoutly in court and stated that 'he had fought for his country and had a perfect right to knock a policeman down.'⁶⁶ As R.D. Storch comments, the imposition of the 'move on' system was 'an attack upon a traditionally sanctioned freedom ... and a keenly felt sense of humiliation.'⁶⁷ Some assaults on the police had no immediate provocation except the latter's very presence in certain areas. In many streets and slums the police were an alien force, regarded as despots, and fair game for attack if they put themselves in a vulnerable position. The police themselves recognised this state of affairs and seldom ventured into such districts, unless they were with others. Even 'doubling up' offered little security. In May 1879, two policemen passing through Guns Lane, West Bromwich, 'were set upon by a mob and beaten almost insensible, one of their assailants using a belt with a heavy buckle. They were both wounded severely and unable to move.'⁶⁸ The Salford Stipendiary noted in 1877 that many police attacks were not mere rough conduct which almost every drunken person was given to but 'premeditated assaults, something serious and determined', and if arrest was attempted 'they use the police in a very brutal manner, kicking with their clogs and beating them.'⁶⁹ Some streets were scenes of violently open warfare especially on Saturday nights. In Birmingham 'gangs of youths terrorised certain neighbourhoods, pelting and stoning the police on sight',⁷⁰ and so frequent was stoning the police in Stafford Street, Wolverhampton, that the Chief Constable referred to the conduct of that street as 'almost unbelievable and a disgrace to every civilized town.'⁷¹

It would appear from studying these police assault cases that the majority of offences were committed in those areas where the police were regarded at best as unwelcome intruders and at worst as hated despots. In the poorest and most deprived parts of these Black Country towns, assaulting and

baiting the police seemed to be the only way of fighting back against the persistent monitoring and control of the streets. Active resistance and hostility to the police seems to have been widespread in the 1870s, and Weinberger has shown that in Birmingham assaults were not confined to the lowest social stratum, that all the manual strata were well represented and that although 'a distinction can be made between the roughs who assaulted the police and the respectable who did not, this distinction does not differentiate between social layers as such but rather between the position and expectation of different groups of people within them.'⁷² Yet in the Black Country, Birmingham and everywhere else the rate of assaults against the police declined substantially from about 1880 and by the 1890s in east London, apart from the rough cockney Irish, it was said that 'nearly everyone speaks well of the police', and 'relations were noticeably friendly.'⁷³ It would appear that by the end of the nineteenth century the vast majority of the working class had acquiesced in police authority and the only resistance to them came from persistently antagonistic groups such as the dispossessed slum dwelling poor, the Irish, juvenile street gangs and those of the criminal sub-culture. Of course acquiescence does not mean consent and in Robert Roberts' Salford slum the poor in general looked upon the policeman with fear and dislike and 'watched him passing with suspicion and his disappearance with relief.'⁷⁴ Part of this acquiescence may have been associated with fear but part was also due to changing attitudes from the police who began to use greater discretion in performing their duties. 'The police have grasped the fact that to treat people roughly is the surest way to make them disorderly', said one witness and in many rough districts policing became increasingly a matter of expediency.⁷⁵ As long as there was public order on the main streets the police were usually prepared to connive at some gambling and drinking offences and as to rows and fights 'the police don't as a rule see them, and don't want to ... The disorderly people might be locked up constantly, but what would be the good of it?'⁷⁶ At the end of the nineteenth century Charles Booth concluded that it was the policy of the London police to be too easy rather than too exacting, realising that 'police practice can only go just a little ahead of the morality of the district. In all they do to suppress rowdyism they must have the moral support of the better class of the neighbours

if they are to be successful.⁷⁷ The confrontation techniques of the 1870s had been replaced by a much more restrained approach, made possible of course by the increasing orderliness of the population.

IV

The third index of community violence that needs to be identified is that of aggravated assaults on women and children which were recorded separately in the criminal statistics and defined as those assaults 'attended with circumstances of particular outrage or atrocity.' In 1853 Parliament had responded to pressure that the law was insufficient to protect women and children from violent assaults by approving legislation which gave magistrates the power to imprison offenders for up to six months with or without hard labour. The offender could also be bound over to keep the peace for a period of up to six months after the end of the sentence. However, many of these cases of family assault were classed as 'common' rather than 'aggravated' and thus the quantification of such assaults is a very difficult exercise. Further, this type of offence is a classic instance of the 'dark figure' of crime, occurring mainly in private and largely unreported by the victims. Neighbours and friends would rarely intervene directly in family quarrels and even if they did they would hardly be likely to involve the police. Thus long-term trends in this offence are extremely difficult to assess although the statistics do indicate a decline relative to population. Aggravated assaults tried summarily reached a peak of about 3,000 offences annually in the mid 1860s and had dropped to under 1,000 offences annually by the middle of the Edwardian period.⁷⁸

By the early 1870s there was growing concern among magistrates and middle class reformers about the brutality inflicted on women. The *Report on Brutal Assaults* (1874) considered whether changes in the law would improve the situation and particularly whether the imposition of flogging would act as a deterrent. However, there were several arguments against this. The Manchester Stipendiary stated that if flogging was introduced the women would not give evidence because 'their chief desire is to get what they term a "protection order" or to have their husbands bound over to keep the peace.'⁷⁹ Similarly the chairman of the North Riding Quarter Sessions argued that in brutal assaults upon wives 'the better feeling often returns in sober moments; the

attachment of the wife is not extinguished, and although compelled for her own security to give evidence against a brutal husband whose conduct is to be punished by imprisonment there would be a greater reluctance if flogging were to result.'⁸⁰ The issue was raised again at the Congress of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Sciences in Liverpool in 1876, when Sergeant Pulling exposed the amount of brutality taking place in that city and the ineffectiveness of the law. 'The ill-usage of women was systematic and little hindered by the supposed strong arm of the law making the lot of a married women whose locality is the "kicking district" simply a duration of suffering and subjection to injury and savage treatment, far worse than that to which the lives of savages are used.' The law seemed designed not to repress crime but to discourage the complainant and to overcome this he suggested the appointment of a Public Presecutor, the taking of depositions from wives, and flogging for second convictions.⁸¹ In 1878 Frances Power Cobbe revived interest in the subject of wife beating through her article in the *Fortnightly Review* entitled 'Wife Torture in England', which included proposals for new legislation. She contended, although without much evidence, that dangerous wife beaters belonged almost exclusively to the artisan and labouring classes:

Colliers, puddlers and weavers have long earned for themselves in this matter a bad reputation ... in the worst districts of London four-fifths of the wife-beating cases are among the lowest class of Irish labourers ... There are also various degrees of wife-beating in the different localities. In London it seldom goes beyond a severe thrashing with a fist, a sufficiently dreadful punishment it is true but mild in comparison to the kickings, tramplings and "purrings" with hobnailed shoes and clogs (of the North) ... it is in the centres of dense mercantile and manufacturing populations that this offence reaches its climax.⁸²

Due to the pressure exerted by Frances Cobbe and others, there passed in 1878 the Matrimonial Causes Act which allowed a wife who had suffered from an 'aggravated assault' to obtain a separation order through the Magistrates Courts with maintenance and custody of children under ten. However the granting of a separation order was no guarantee of safety, as

men often sought revenge. For example William Henshaw, a hawker of Wolverhampton, on the same day that his wife had been granted a separation order, pursued her into an entry and then kicked her until she fell, for which he was sentenced to six months hard labour.⁸³ All this meant that a woman still had to weigh up carefully the consequences of taking her husband before the courts. In the Black Country, the magistrates were usually very reluctant to grant a separation order unless there had been previous assaults of the same nature. When women asked for such an order, the usual practice was to adjourn the case for one or two months to see how the marriage progressed. Therefore, a wife 'qualified' for separation and maintenance only through a series of brutal assaults. Another limitation on the wife's freedom of action was the level of maintenance granted by the court. Many awards amounted to only five or six shillings a week. Obviously, separation might put an end to a hellish existence for some women, but the problem of subsistence must have deterred many except the most desperate, especially those with large families to consider.

Throughout the period women faced great problems if they sought to use the courts to redress their grievances. The fear of revenge, a lack of knowledge of the law, unwelcome publicity, the impoverishment of the family, must have combined to produce a massive deterrent. Perhaps the biggest deterrent for a wife was the fear of subsequent revenge. What was to happen to a wife when the husband came out of prison determined to make her suffer for having summoned him in the first place? Although the law did provide for an offender to be bound over to keep the peace, this provision seemed to be hardly used at all in the Black Country except in the case of a man with previous convictions. Another problem was that a woman would usually have to apply for a summons before the man came to court, which would cost her two shillings unless her injuries were so evident as to induce the magistrate to issue the summons without charge.

When the summons was served the woman had to face the consequences. James Dance, a bricklayers' labourer of West Bromwich, 'flew at his wife' when this happened and 'although she was weak and nearly famished for want of food, he kicked, struck, and bit her, and behaved like a madman.'⁸⁴

Very often the woman sought to withdraw the charge when the matter came to court. As the Wolverhampton police court reporter observed:

the women in the witness-box with broken hands, faces and arms black and blue, and blood flowing from wounds, the result of brutality on the part of their husbands, but despite this he had seen them and heard them with tears in their eyes, plead for those who had cruelly ill-used them and asked that the charge might be withdrawn. They had perjured themselves that their 'better halves' might receive the more merciful consideration of the court, and have said they merely took the summons out in the heat of the moment...⁸⁵

Thomas Holmes, a London police court missionary, noticed the same thing. 'I see women with bruised and battered faces, I see their cuts and wounds and putrefying sores, I hear stories of devilish cruelty, and I hear the poor, bruised women pleading that their husbands may not be punished for their cruelty.'⁸⁶ This reluctance to substantiate charges made may have resulted from the fear of subsequent revenge but more likely it was a matter of economic consideration. The loss of the wage-earner in prison meant absolute poverty unless the woman worked herself and this would be almost impossible where there were young children. The only alternative was to seek help from her family or her neighbours whose own resources were likely to be limited. Thus the workhouse might be the only solution. As Davidoff points out, once a woman married she shared the basic precariousness of all working class families - a dependence on a man's wage. 'Her deference was to his paternalistic status - hers was a complete physical subordination with physical coercion often the source of the husband's control ... Having a good husband or a "real bad un", was, in a sense, to be accepted as a stroke of fate in just the same way as the wife accepted the good of the family survival over her individual interests.'⁸⁷ Domestic circumstances, then, gave working class women little option but to struggle on and put up with their wretchedness - 'the absolute rule for all sub-affluent marriages was like it or lump it.'⁸⁸

From studies of court cases at a local level some idea can be gained of the extent of violence, and the sources of tension that led to conflict between the sexes as well as some sense of the attitude of working class communities towards such violence. In her study of crimes of violence between working class men and women in London, Nancy

Tomes concludes that 'based on a neighbourhood perspective, whatever his or her personal experience, no working class individual could escape exposure to acts of violence between the sexes.' Similarly Ellen Ross refers to an East End culture 'where husband and wife violence was incredibly frequent.'⁸⁹ The most dangerous place in nineteenth century Manchester, according to David Jones, was the home, with plenty of evidence from court cases and newspapers of brutality 'underlining the ferocity which sprang from irreconcilable marriage and tense common-law relationships.'⁹⁰ The most common reasons behind these assaults in the Black Country would appear to be drunkenness, money problems, the alleged failure of the woman to perform her house-keeping functions adequately, and jealousy. However, it should be stressed that in some cases the husband assaulted his wife for no apparent reason which may reinforce the idea of 'customary coercion' as part of a behavioural norm among certain sections of the working class. 'Within marriage, violence was viewed as normal because it was seen as serving a disciplinary function ... the working class community recognised violence or threats of violence as legitimate means of maintaining the husband's superiority in the family.'⁹¹ Some offenders before the court defended themselves on these grounds. A Wolverhampton labourer, Thomas Fitzgerald, accused of hitting and kicking his wife in Queen Square, replied that 'he thought it was his right to chastise her and get her home as she had had beer', and a Walsall man sentenced for assaulting his wife explained to the magistrates, 'Do you call this a land of liberty when a fellow ain't at liberty to thrash his own wife?'⁹²

Drink was a very important factor in most of these cases. A man often assaulted his wife because he was already drunk or wanted the means to get into that condition. Wives lived in fear of their husbands' return from the public house; some of them were said to be 'mad with drink' when they arrived back. In some cases drunkenness and temper led to extreme acts of violence such as attacks with razors, pokers and any handy weapon as well as with fists and feet. The need to get money for drink led to other assaults. John Dasey, a Walsall miner, had demanded money from his wife for drink but she had told him to sell his pigeons. He took them to a public house, sold them, returned drunk and kicked her until she was insensible. The surgeon reported 'that he had literally danced upon her and that she

was in a very weak condition.' This was one of the few cases which resulted in a maximum sentence of six months hard labour.⁹³ The general pressure of living on a precarious budget led to many quarrels and assaults. The wife had the ultimate responsibility of feeding the children and she was often desperate to get money from her husband. In one Dudley case, Frederic Wood, a basket maker, had been followed to the public house by his wife because 'the family had no victuals or fire and he had sold a blanket and was drinking the proceeds.' He refused to give up the money and when his wife followed him through the town he turned and kicked her violently, saturating her clothes with blood.⁹⁴

Whatever the immediate cause of assault, many cases studied reveal a pattern of coercion which had existed for years. Frances Cobbe noted that 'the suffering wives take it for granted that a husband is a beating animal and may be heard to remark when extraordinarily ill-treated by a stranger, - "that they never were so badly used, no not by their own 'usbands".'⁹⁵ Similarly Thomas Holmes found in London that 'wife-beating was so common among a certain class that plenty of wives take it as a perfect matter of course, and did not appear to mind very much unless they were seriously damaged.'⁹⁶ This pattern of coercion and often resigned acceptance continued on into the first decades of the twentieth century. A St. Helens woman born during World War I referred to the way her own father and many others behaved.

Men were tyrants... There was an awful lot of wifebeating and women were the underdogs... My mother slept in the outside lavatory at times. The men that didn't drink and behaved like that were the worst of all ... The wifebeating came from the Victorian era. When it happened, women went to neighbours' houses. Then the husband would come and kick the door down to get the wife out ... It was just a way of life.⁹⁷

In assessing the incidence of family assaults and its under-representation in the criminal statistics one must be wary of over compensating and assuming it to be general practice in many working class families, especially as the evidence is fragmentary. However, it would appear that the physical coercion of families by the husband would have been considered by contemporaries to be unremarkable, if not

customary. The authority of the father was accepted and if there were blows they were part of the marriage bond and were not the business of neighbours or of the police.⁹⁸ As Nancy Tomes remarks of the London working class, 'in a community where physical violence occurred frequently, these crimes were deviant not in their nature but in the level of their violence.'⁹⁹ The idea that the physical coercion of wives and families was perceived as the masculine prerogative of matrimony rather than as a potential criminal offence is given some support by the fact that in the Black Country police court cases a wide range of occupations and of social strata were involved.¹⁰⁰ Undoubtedly poverty, drunkenness, and wretched living conditions played a part but the helpless dependence of women was a very important factor. Jack London, in *The People of the Abyss* (1903), thought that in the lowest social classes the idea of male domination was at its strongest:

A woman of the lower ghetto classes is as much the slave of her husband as is the Indian squaw ... the men are economically dependent upon their masters, and the women are economically dependent on the men. The result is that the woman gets the beating that the man should give his master and she can do nothing.¹⁰¹

This helpless dependence of women together with a likely acceptance of 'reasonable' coercion makes it exceptionally difficult for the historian to make any judgement on the scale of such violence. Women would not bring their husbands to court unless they were suffering from repeated and excessive violence. Although Tomes claims for London a true decline in all forms of aggravated assaults upon women between 1853 and 1889 which 'seems to reflect a real change in behaviour' the statistics are not convincing. As we have seen the national indices of aggravated assaults also appear to be declining steadily in this period but this may be misleading because an increasing number of women were making use of other legal remedies. Women would stop short of getting warrants served on their husbands but as the law changed in the late nineteenth century women took other action. The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1878 did provide women with the opportunity of getting a separation order from the magistrates and when this Act was strengthened in 1895 with the provision that women suffering from persistent violence could leave

their husbands and then apply to the magistrates within whose jurisdiction they lived for a summons for separation and maintenance, a flood of applications resulted which, as Margaret May suggests, 'provides a clearer gauge of matrimonial misery hidden by previous measures.'¹⁰² In the first year after the passing of the Summary Jurisdiction (Married Women) Act of 1895, 5,314 maintenance orders were granted in England and Wales and by the 1900s between seven and eight thousand orders were made annually.¹⁰³ The problem of the battered wife continued to receive attention in the Edwardian period and further evidence was supplied to the Royal Commission on Divorce and Matrimonial Causes which was set up in 1909, although ultimately no changes in the law resulted from it.¹⁰⁴ However, it is still true that the real incidence of this offence remained largely hidden in this period - just as it continues to be in the late twentieth century.

Included in the statistical tables for aggravated assaults are assaults on children under fourteen. Although children were supposed to be protected by the Act of 1853, in practice the authority and right of parents to discipline and chastise their children as they pleased was not seriously challenged until the end of the nineteenth century. Violence inflicted on children was commonplace throughout Victorian society and the difficulty was to make a distinction between legitimate and unacceptable violence. The courts usually became involved only when there was cruelty on a horrific scale such as a Wolverhampton case in 1884 when Henry Phillips, a wheelwright, had tied up his eleven year old son and beat his naked flesh with a clothes line, rubbing salt into the wounds.¹⁰⁵ It was not until the 1880s that the question of cruelty to children became a subject of national concern and in April 1883 the first society for the prevention of cruelty to children was established in Liverpool, followed by Bristol and Birmingham in the same year and London, Glasgow and Hull in 1885.¹⁰⁶ In London, Benjamin Waugh, a Congregational minister, was made the first secretary of the society and he campaigned determinedly for a change in the law. In an article written jointly with Cardinal Manning entitled 'The Child of the English Savage', he reported on the first year's work of the London society. The problem facing the society was that 'cruelty is done chiefly where its doer is most secure from detection, and where no one has the right to follow them.'

The article pleaded for new legislation 'to place the children of the savage on the same level as his dog', an ironical reference to the fact that legislation had existed to protect animals for some sixty years.¹⁰⁷ By 1889, 31 towns and cities had joined societies to protect children from cruelty and in May of that year they amalgamated to form the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Largely because of the evidence these societies provided, Parliament approved in 1889 the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act known as the Children's Charter. This Act gave police and magistrates the power to intervene in domestic circumstances where they suspected cruelty to children and if necessary to remove a child from a suspect home. The ill treatment of children was punishable by three months to two years imprisonment and fines of £25 to £100. In 1894 the Act was amended to protect children up to sixteen and the definition of cruelty was broadened.¹⁰⁸ This legislation helped to make visible the extent of cruelty to children although the figures include 'neglect' as well as 'violence'. Between 1893 and 1914 there was an annual average of some 3,400 summary prosecutions for cruelty in England and Wales.¹⁰⁹ These figures would have been a great deal higher if the National Society had not pursued a policy of prosecuting and removing the child only as a last resort, relying on a system of warnings supervised by the inspectors. By 1897-8 the Society was dealing with 25,000 complaints a year. In his Report for 1899 the Criminal Registrar addressed himself to the question of cruelty to children observing that prosecutions were increasing because of the existence of an active Society and because of strong public opinion which favoured carrying out the law. He referred to various reports of the National Society which indicated that prosecutions for 'violence' as opposed to 'neglect' had averaged 40 percent in the 1880s but this had been reduced to around 20 percent in the 1890s. The places alleged to have the highest proportion of crimes of violence against children in 1894-5 were London with 29 percent, Birmingham 23 percent, followed by Newcastle and Leeds at twenty percent. The Assistant Criminal Registrar had worked out his own local cruelty table using the criteria of murder of children under one year of age, prosecutions for cruelty to children, and numbers of children abandoned under two years of age, although it was admitted that too much stress could not be laid on the figures.

Table 6.3: Cruelty to Children per 100,000 Population in Selected English Towns, 1889 110

 Towns greater than 88,000 population

Liverpool	103.48
Wolverhampton	47.80
Newcastle	43.72
Manchester	32.31
Salford	26.51

Towns between 34,000 and 88,000 population

Bootle	77.11
Wigan	58.18
Warrington	53.49
Stockport	45.56
St. Helens	38.31

Referring to Edwardian Salford, Robert Roberts recalled that the punishment of children seemed to be widespread and severe:

no one who spent his childhood in the slums during those years will easily forget the regular and often brutal assaults on some children perpetrated in the name of discipline and often for the most venial offences ...

Whenever my mother heard of a heinous case, as with the woman who boasted in the shop, "My master (husband) allus flogs 'em till the blood runs down their back!" she quietly "put the Cruelty man on". In its city windows the NSPCC displayed photographs of beaten children and rows of confiscated belts and canes. Gallantly as it worked, the Society hardly touched the fringe of the problem.¹¹¹

V

Was there a real change in the social behaviour of the working classes in this period? There does seem to have been a watershed in the incidence of community violence around about 1880. In the middle of the 1870s common assault, drunkenness and assaults on police officers had reached very high levels. There was enough government concern to set up investigations into brutality (1874) and drunkenness

(1877) and to strengthen the law with regard to aggravated assaults on women. From approximately 1880 onwards the indices of community violence showed a marked decline, suggesting a substantial change in public order in most areas, although it has always to be remembered that many domestic assaults would be unreported. Clearly there was much less casual violence by the beginning of the twentieth century and there was much less disorderly conduct in the streets. The figures for both common assault and police assault continued to decline throughout the Edwardian period and the latter index particularly provides an accurate guide to the development of new standards of discipline and control. Contemporary observers and social investigators noted the steady improvement in the 'habits and the morals' of most of the working class. Evidence given to the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes (1884-5) referred to improvements in manners, sobriety and public order.¹¹² Charles Booth, in his survey of the London working class, cited police evidence as being practically agreed that the people were much less rowdy than formerly: 'totally different people to what they were thirty-three years ago said one who had joined the force then.' He concluded that there was less drunken rowdiness and despite outbursts of 'hooliganism', much less street violence and 'such scenes of open depravity that occurred in years gone by do not happen now.'¹¹³

Although there may have been a decline in the 'spirit of lawlessness' as the Criminal Registrar observed in 1899, it is important to bear in mind the specific social strata that this can be applied to. Thomas Wright, a journeyman engineer, writing in 1868, had divided the working class into three main sections: the educated workman, the intelligent artisan, and what he termed the lower working class. 'The working man of the latter type has more in common with the roughs - he lives in low, disreputable neighbourhoods, his household is genuinely dirty and overcrowded, he habitually loafs about street corners and public houses when not at work. He is usually given to drunkenness and often to wife-beating. He allows his children to hang as they grow.'¹¹⁴ It can be argued that violence was mainly the prerogative of this section of the working class, in particular casual and unskilled labourers who lived alongside paupers, vagrants and those of the criminal sub-culture. Over the period this stratum was increasingly reduced and isolated to join an under class or 'residuum' whilst the

vast majority of the working class became increasingly respectable and law abiding, accommodated and controlled by various state agencies.¹¹⁵ This residuum remained both hostile to authority and largely untouched by the attempts of the state to improve it. Crowded together in particular courts, streets and slums, these people did not accept the 'civilising' message and continued to act according to behavioural norms received over many generations. In their world the police and other strangers remained alien and unwelcome, fighting and brawling was normal, and family violence customary. Of course within the slum itself there were many social gradations and each family earned its status from its conduct, 'its manners and morals being judged before a mass public tribunal.' Robert Roberts reminds us that in 'examining the standards of the Edwardian lower orders one always has to bear in mind that street disturbances, gutter fighters, and general destroyers of the peace come from comparatively small sections of the community.'¹¹⁶

If there was, as appears likely, a real change in the incidence of community violence in this period to what can this be attributed? It can be argued that material wretchedness had a debasing effect both morally and physically and that as environmental and economic conditions improved so did standards of behaviour. However, poverty still existed on a considerable scale in Edwardian Britain and improvements in the standard of living of the working class were only marginal and for those at the bottom of the social scale it is difficult to detect any improvement at all. In any case economic conditions are not always a satisfactory indication of community violence and many contemporaries noted increases in violence as a result of prosperity and high wages rather than the reverse. It does not appear that the criminal law was a more effective deterrent to disorderly conduct than it had been in the mid nineteenth century because apart from alterations in the law relating to assaults on women and children there was little change. The application of the law is a different matter and here one does sense a determination on the behalf of magistrates and watch committees to put down violence and rowdiness and to 'civilise' their communities through the imposition of new standards of respectability. The main instruments of this new urban discipline were the police whose strength and efficiency increased gradually throughout the period. By the end of the nineteenth century the authorities had succeeded in

their mission and public order in the streets was a reality. However, although this may help to explain the decline in common assault and police assault, many other assaults were carried out in private and were not subject to police control.

Perhaps the answer is to be seen in the increasing number of state, philanthropic and evangelical agencies and controls at work in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain which helped to make the transition from rough and potentially disorderly communities to stable, settled and socially disciplined communities. The agencies that assisted in this process included reformatories and industrial schools, compulsory education after 1870, boys' and girls' clubs, the temperance movement, the Salvation Army, the Church Army, missions of all kinds, the Charity Organisation Society, the University Settlement Movement, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and successive waves of clergymen, charity workers, court missionaries and social investigators concerned to identify social problems and obtain improving legislation. Faced with this offensive the great mass of the working class may have become docile and, as Stedman Jones argues, developed a culture 'which no longer reflected any widespread class combativity ... and was no longer threatening or subversive but conservative and defensive.'¹¹⁷ The benefits of compulsory education in particular were stressed by contemporaries. Walter Besant wrote of east London in 1901 that 'there was a consensus that the influence of the schools had been to humanise the people in a manner actually visible to all. The results are before us. The children of today are in every respect better than they were twenty years ago,' and Charles Booth referred to the importance of the schools as agents of discipline 'where rules of proper behaviour have been inculcated.'¹¹⁸ Society seemed to be slowly improving and as Edward Carpenter observed in 1905: 'Looking around us we see all the elements of a free human society preparing. Education, widespreading, is bringing a knowledge of the conditions and necessities of mutually helpful social life even to the least instructed. It is bringing also a far reaching sense of human dignity and equality.'¹¹⁹

NOTES

1. *Criminal Registrar's Report*, 1893, pp.73-5.
2. *Criminal Registrar's Report*, 1896, p.17.
3. *Criminal Registrar's Report*, 1899, p.37.
4. *Criminal Registrar's Report*, 1908, p.14.
5. G. Grosvenor, 'Statistics of the Abatement of Crime in England and Wales during the Twenty years ending 1887-1888', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 53, 1890 and L. Levi, 'A Summary of Indictable and Summary jurisdiction offences in England and Wales, 1857-1878', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 43, 1880.
6. A.C. Hall, *Crime and its Relation to Social Progress* (London, 1902), p.358; R. Quinton, *Crime and Criminals (1876-1910)* (London, 1910). However, according to H. Zehr, *Crime and the Development of Modern Society* (London, 1976) assault rates in France and Germany rose between 1832-1910, the opposite of what happened in England and Wales.
7. V.A.C. Gatrell, and T.B. Hadden, 'Criminal Statistics and their Interpretation', in E.A. Wrigley (ed.), *Nineteenth Century Society: Essays in the use of quantitative methods for the study of social data* (Cambridge, 1972). See also T.R. Gurr, *Rogues, Rebels and Reformers, A Political History of Urban Crime and Conflict* (London, 1976).
8. V.A.C. Gatrell, 'The Decline of Theft and Violence in Victorian and Edwardian England', in V.A.C. Gatrell, B. Lenman and G. Parker (eds.), *Crime and the Law* (London, 1980), pp.286-9.
9. Community violence could be said to include the indices of murder, manslaughter, felonies and malicious wounding and sexual assaults which were all indictable offences. However, serious acts of violence were comparatively rare and because of extraneous factors very little can be learned from the statistical trends in these offences. In this period less than 5 percent of criminal violence was tried on indictment.
10. J.J. Tobias, *Crime and Industrial Society in the 19th Century* (London, 1967), pp.14-21.
11. Gatrell and Hadden, 'Criminal Statistics', p.337.
12. D.J.V. Jones, and A. Bainbridge, *Crime in Nineteenth Century Wales* (S.S.R.C. Report, 1976), vol.I, pp.64-9.
13. R.D. Storch, 'The Study of Urban Crime', *Journal of Social History*, 4, 1979.
14. Indictable offences were those tried before a judge or bench of magistrates sitting with a jury,

with the jury responsible for the verdict. Summary offences were those tried by magistrates, sitting without a jury at petty sessions with both verdict and sentence being given by the magistrates.

15. *Criminal Registrar's Report*, 1896, p.17.

16. *Report from the Select Committee on the Prevention of Intemperance*, PP 1877, 3, p.33.

17. *Report on the State of the Law Relating to Brutal Assaults*, PP 1874, p.105.

18. F.P. Cobbe, 'Wife Torture in England', *Contemporary Review*, 32, 1878, p.81.

19. F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Oxford, 1958), p.161.

20. D.J.V. Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1982), p.104. See also Jones and Bainbridge, *Crime*, pp. 147-23.

21. David Philips, *Crime and Authority in Victorian England: the Black Country, 1835-1860* (London, 1977), pp.283-4.

22. C. de Motte, 'The Dark Side of Town. Crime in Manchester and Salford, 1815-1875' (Unpublished Univ. of Kansas Ph.D. Thesis, 1976).

23. B. Weinberger, 'Crime and Society in Birmingham, 1860-1885' (Unpublished Univ. of Warwick Ph.D. Thesis, 1981). See also D.C. Woods, 'Crime and Society in the Black Country, 1860-1900' (Unpublished Univ. of Aston Ph.D. Thesis, 1979).

24. Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London, 1851), vol. I. p.16.

25. G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford, 1971), p.12. For further details of violence in London see D.J.V. Jones, 'Crime in London: the evidence of the Metropolitan Police, 1831-1892', in Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community*, pp.121-4.

26. *Report on Brutal Assaults*, PP 1875, p.152.

27. *Report on Brutal Assaults*, PP 1875, pp.108, 111.

28. *Report on Brutal Assaults*, PP 1875, p.44.

29. *S.C. On Intemperance*, PP 1877, vol. III, p.305. See also evidence given by the Chief Constable of Manchester (p.171), the Liverpool magistrate R. Neilson, (p.100) and Superintendent Turner of the East End of London (p.229).

30. *S.C. on Intemperance*, PP 1877, Appendix O, p.393.

31. For further contemporary evidence on the connection between drunkenness and violent crime see

F. Peek, 'Intemperance: Its Prevalence, Effects and Remedy, *Contemporary Review*, 11, 1876 and F.W.Farrar, 'Drink and Crime', *Fortnightly Review*, 53, 1893. The Criminal Registrar noted that correspondence between the incidence of drunkenness and assault appeared to exist up to 1895 but since then there had been a divergence, *Criminal Registrar's Report*, 1905, pp.27-28.

32. G. Kitson-Clark, *The Making of Victorian England* (London, 1961), p.127.

33. J. Burnett, *Plenty and Want* (Harmondsworth, 1966), p.199.

34. A.E. Dingle, 'Drink and Working Class Living Standards in Britain', *Economic History Review*, xxv(4) 1972).

35. Of the total employed in 1881 only 7 percent in Wolverhampton and 5 percent in Walsall and West Bromwich could be described as being in middle class occupations. West Bromwich had 33 percent of its workforce employed in the coal and iron trades and Dudley 38 percent. Wolverhampton and Walsall had a greater diversity of trades although the iron industry and metal trades accounted for 28 percent of the Wolverhampton workforce.

36. Wolverhampton Central Library and Walsall Town Hall, Criminal and Judicial Statistics and Watch Committee Minutes for Wolverhampton and Walsall.

37. *Walsall Free Press*, August 21, 1875.

38. *Dudley Herald*, September 25, 1880.

39. W.S. Swayne, *Parson's Pleasure* (London and Edinburgh, 1934), p.138.

40. W. Thorne, *My Life's Battles* (London, n.d.), pp.45-6.

41. *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, May 4, 1887.

42. *Walsall Free Press*, July 20, 1867 and *West Bromwich Free Press*, June 17, 1876.

43. Octavia Hill, *Homes of the London Poor, Four Year Management of a London Court* (London, 1869), pp.30-1, 89-90; C. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London, First Series, Poverty*, vol. III, pp.37-42. See also J. White, *Rothschild Buildings: Life in an East End Tenement Block, 1867-1920*

44. E. Ross, 'Survival Networks: Women's Neighbourhood Sharing in London before World War One', *History Workshop*, 15, 1983. The same pattern of neighbourhood quarrels is observed by Weinberger in Birmingham particularly in crowded courts sharing water taps and work houses; see Weinberger, 'Crime', pp.205-6.

45. *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, November 21, 1883.
46. *West Bromwich Free Press*, February 6, 1886 and *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, November 23, 1870.
47. *Walsall Free Press*, February 25, 1882.
48. *Walsall Free Press*, August 26, 1882.
49. *Dudley Herald*, October 21, 1876. See D. Rubinstein, *School Attendance in London 1870-1904* (Hull, 1969), pp.49-51, and J.S. Hurt, *Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes, 1860-1918* (London, 1979), pp.155-6, for other examples of assaults on School Board visitors.
50. *Walsall Free Press*, July 20, 1889.
51. R.D. Storch, 'The Policeman as Domestic Missionary: Urban discipline and popular culture in Northern England, 1850-1880', *Journal of Social History*, 9, 1976, p.503.
52. B. Weinberger, 'The Police and the Public in Mid-Nineteenth Century Warwickshire', in V. Bailey (ed.), *Policing and Punishment in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London, 1981), pp.67-9.
53. Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community*, pp.154-5.
54. Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community*, pp.123-4.
55. Woods, 'Crime and Society', pp.235-9.
56. *Report on Brutal Assaults*, PP 1875, p.48.
57. J.H. Elliott, 'The Increase of National Prosperity and of moral agents compared with the state of crime and pauperism', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 31, 1868, pp.314-5.
58. *Wolverhampton Central Library, Wolverhampton Watch Committee Minutes, Annual Report, 1878.*
59. See W.R. Miller, 'Police Authority in London and New York City 1830-1870', *Journal of Social History*, 8, 1975; R.D. Storch, 'The Plague of the Blue Locusts: police reform and popular resistance in Northern England, 1840-1857', *International Review of Social History*, 20(1) 1975, and P. Cohen, 'Policing the Working Class City', in M. Fitzgerald, G. McLennan and J. Pawson (eds.), *Crime and Society: Readings in History and Theory* (London, 1981).
60. *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, June 26, 1878.
61. In Islington the local press recorded 146 incidents of affrays between police and community from 1880 to 1920, and in the 1920s collective self-defence against the police still existed; Cohen, 'Policing', pp.117-8.
62. *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, November 25, 1874.
63. *West Bromwich Weekly News*, February 26, 1879.
64. *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, August 20, 1884.
65. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of*

- London, *Third Series, Religious Influences*, vol. I, p.47. See also J.A. Jackson, *The Irish in Britain* (London, 1963), pp.58-62; L.H. Lees, *Exiles of Erin* (Manchester, 1979); J. Denvir, *The Irish in Britain* (London, 1892).
66. *Dudley Herald*, March 8, 1873.
67. Storch, 'Domestic Missionary', p.482.
68. *West Bromwich Echo*, May 31, 1879. See also W.R. Cockcroft, 'The Liverpool Police Force 1836-1902', in S.P. Bell (ed.), *Victorian Lancashire* (Newton Abbott, 1974), p.165.
69. *S.C. Intemperance, Drunkenness*, 3, p.33. For the ferocity of some attacks on the police see J. Bent, *Criminal Life: Reminiscences of 42 years as a Police Officer* (Manchester, 1892), pp.76-7.
70. Weinberger, 'Crime', p.69.
71. *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, December 12, 1877.
72. Weinberger, 'Crime', pp.73-4.
73. Booth, *Religious Influences*, vol. I, pp.52-3.
74. Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (Manchester, 1973), p.100. See also Standish Meacham, *A Life Apart: The English Working Class, 1890-1914* (London, 1977), p.18.
75. Booth, *Social Influences and Conclusion*, pp.140-141.
76. Booth, *Social Influences and Conclusion*, pp.132-3, 137.
77. Booth, *Social Influences and Conclusion*, pp.140-41.
78. *Judicial and Criminal Statistics for England and Wales*, 1857-1914.
79. *Report on Brutal Assaults*, PP 1875, p.108.
80. *Report on Brutal Assaults*, PP 1875, p.60.
81. *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Sciences*, 1876, pp.345-61.
82. F.P. Cobbe, 'Wife Torture in England', *Contemporary Review*, 32, 1878, pp.58-9.
83. *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, November 27, 1890.
84. *West Bromwich Weekly News*, May 27, 1876.
85. *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, May 4, 1887.
86. T. Holmes, *Pictures and Problems from London Police Courts* (London, 1900), p.24.
87. L. Davidoff, 'Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England', *Journal of Social History*, 7, 1974, pp.418-9. See also I. Minor, 'Working Class Women and Matrimonial Law Reform, 1890-1914', in D. Martin and D. Rubinstein, (eds.), *Ideology and the Labour Movement* (London,

1979), pp.115-7.

88. G. Best, *Mid Victorian Britain, 1851-1875* (London, 1971), p.304.

89. N. Tomes, 'A Torrent of Abuse: Crimes of Violence between working class men and women in London, 1840-1875', *Journal of Social History*, 11, 1978, p.329; E. Ross, 'Fierce Questions and Taunts: Married Life in Working-Class London, 1870-1914', *Feminist Studies*, 8, 1982, pp.557, 591-2.

90. Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community*, pp.152-3. See also Bent, *Criminal Life*, pp.19-21.

91. Tomes, 'Torrent of Abuse', p.338.

92. *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, July 3, 1878; *Walsall Free Press*, May 22, 1869.

93. *Walsall Free Press*, September 28, 1872.

94. *Dudley Herald*, July 6, 1872.

95. Cobbe, 'Wife Torture'.

96. Holmes, *Police Courts*, p.73.

97. Charles Forman, *Industrial Town: Self Portrait of St Helens in the 1920s* (St Albans, 1979), pp.128-9. See also Florence Bell's comments on wife beating in Middlesborough, *At the Works* (1907; repr. New York, 1969), pp.238-9.

98. See A. Paterson, *Across the Bridges or Life by the South London River-Side* (London, 1911), pp. 30-31: 'sometimes there are blows of which she says nothing ...', W. Besant, *East London* (London, 1901), p.151; M. Loane, *An Englishman's Castle* (London, 1909), pp.108-9, 178-9, 188-9; and Raphael Samuel, *East End Underworld: Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding* (London, 1981) where Arthur Harding states (p.21) that 'Victorian husbands of the working class were very ignorant and brutal in their treatment of women'.

99. Tomes, 'Torrent of Abuse', p.329.

100. In Birmingham wife beaters were also drawn from a wide area and across many occupations although the unskilled and metal workers predominated. Weinberger, 'Crime', pp.203-4.

101. Jack London, *The People of the Abyss* (London 1903), p.52.

102. M. May, 'Violence in the Family: an Historical Perspective', in J.P. Martin (ed.), *Violence and the Family* (Chichester, 1978), p.149. See also J.H. Potter, *Inasmuch: The Story of the Police Court Mission 1876-1926* (London, 1927), pp.67-80. At a local level in the industrial town of Walsall, with a population of approximately 85,000 in 1901, over 40 separation orders were made annually between 1900-1910.

103. However, appeals to the court for obtain-

ing the money frequently met with indifference. See Meacham, *Life Apart*, p.18.

104. Women's Co-operative Guild, *Working Women and Divorce* (London, 1911), particularly Appendix II, pp.59-63.

105. *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, March 19, 1884.

106. See I. Pinchbeck and M. Hewitt, *Children in English Society*, II, *From the Eighteenth Century to the Children's Act, 1948* (London, 1973); J. Walvin, *A Child's World: A Social History of English Childhood 1800-1914* (Harmondsworth, 1982); May, 'Violence'; J.S. Heywood, *Children in Care* (London, 1959); G.K. Behlmer, *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England, 1870-1908* (Stanford, 1982).

107. B. Waugh, and H. Manning, 'The Child of the English Savage', *Contemporary Review*, 49, 1886. See also B. Waugh, 'Street Children', *Contemporary Review*, 53, 1888, and M.C. Tabor, 'The Rights of Children', *Contemporary Review*, 54, 1888. Mary Tabor referred to 'an appalling amount of semi-starvation, illtreatment and neglect to which children are subjected with impunity at the hands of drunken, dissolute, and idle parents.'

108. Pinchbeck and Hewitt, *Children*, pp.623-9; Behlmer, *Child Abuse*, chs. 4, 5.

109. *Judicial and Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1893-1914*

110. *Criminal Registrar's Report, 1899*, pp.43-5. By 1910 the N.S.P.C.C. found that only seven percent of its complaints could be attributed to violence; see Behlmer, *Child Abuse*, p.181.

111. Roberts, *Classic Slum*, p.45. See also Thea Thompson, *Edwardian Childhoods* (London, 1981).

112. *Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes*, PP 1884-5; see evidence given by Sir E.W. Walker and Joseph Chamberlain.

113. Booth, *Social Influences and Conclusion*, pp.200-201.

114. T. Wright, *The Great Unwashed* (London, 1868), pp.24-5.

115. For a discussion on the nature of the English working class in this period see Meacham, *Life Apart*, pp.11-29.

116. Roberts, *Classic Slum*, p.24.

117. G. Stedman Jones, 'Working Class Culture and Working Class Politics in London, 1870-1900: Notes on the re-making of a working class', *Journal of Social History*, 7, 1974.

118. Besant, *East London*, p.332. Booth, *Social Influences*, p.202. See also D. Rubinstein, 'Socialization and the London School Board 1870-

1904', in P. McCann, (ed.), *Popular Education and Socialisation in the nineteenth century* (London, 1977).

119. E. Carpenter, *Prisons, Police and Punishment* (London 1905), p.62.

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